

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, April 13, 1999** 1:30 p.m.

Date: 99/04/13

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon. Let us pray.

O Almighty, guide us all in our deliberations and debate that we may determine courses of action which will be to the enduring benefit of our province of Alberta.

Amen.

head: Introduction of Visitors

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, today I'm honoured to make two sets of introductions. First I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two distinguished guests who are seated in your gallery. They are Mrs. Valda Levin, president of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton, and Mrs. Gillian Horwitz, who is chairperson for Holocaust education with the Jewish Federation of Edmonton. As hon. members know, today is Holocaust Remembrance Day, a day of tremendous significance to people of Jewish faith around the world. It is indeed an honour for us to have Mrs. Levin and Mrs. Horwitz visit the Legislature on this important day. I would invite all members of the Legislature to give these guests a very warm welcome.

I'm also very pleased to officially introduce to you and to all members of the Legislature five distinguished members of the Sikh community. They are very involved with the tercentenary celebrations of Khalsa. They are seated in your gallery. I would introduce Mr. Pal Singh Purewal, who is chair of the tercentenary celebrations; Mr. Dave Purewal, who is head of the Public Relations Tercentenary Committee; Mr. Jasbeer Singh, who is a representative of the Sikh Federation of Edmonton; Mr. Avtar Pannu; and Mr. Kulmit Sangha. I would ask that these guests also receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: Presenting Petitions

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With permission I present an SOS petition signed by 178 citizens from Entwistle, Spruce Grove, Wildwood, Tomahawk, and Seba Beach urging the Government to increase support for children in public and separate schools to a level that covers increased costs due to contract settlements, curriculum changes, technology, and aging schools.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a petition to present today with 375 names from people who reside in my constituency who are urging the Legislative Assembly to increase funding of children in public and separate schools to a level that covers increased costs due to contract settlements, curriculum changes, technology, and aging schools.

These, too, are part of the SOS petitions.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table a petition signed with 106 names from Edmonton and district from the Save Our Schools committee. It reads:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to increase funding of children in public and separate schools to a level that covers increased costs due to contract settlements, curriculum changes, technology, and aging schools.

That brings the total to 7,105.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I'd like to table in the Assembly a petition signed by 110 Albertans, including residents of Beaumont, Thorsby, Sherwood Park, Camrose, and even Edmonton-Glenora. The petition reads as follows:

We the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to increase support for children in public and separate schools to a level that covers increased costs due to contract settlements, curriculum changes, technology, and aging schools.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real privilege that I have today to table a petition on behalf of 23 people from the Coaldale/Lethbridge area. This petition is

to urge the Government to increase funding of children in public and separate schools to a level that covers increased costs due to contract settlements, curriculum changes, technology, and aging schools.

Thank you.

head: Reading and Receiving Petitions

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition that I tabled yesterday now be read and received.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to hold widespread public hearings involving as many existing clients as want to be heard before making any changes to the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped program.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I tabled last week be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to hold widespread public hearings involving as many existing clients as want to be heard before making any changes to the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped program.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request that the petition which I tabled with this Assembly just before our break regarding AISH consultations now be read and received.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to hold widespread

public hearings involving as many existing clients as want to be heard before making any changes to the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped program.

head: Presenting Reports by  
Standing and Special Committees

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

MS GRAHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Private Bills has had certain bills under consideration and wishes to report as follows. The committee recommends that the following private bills proceed with amendments: Bill Pr. 1, National Bond Insurance Corporation Act, and Bill Pr. 3, Consumers Insurance Company Act.

As part of this report I will be tabling five copies of the amendments proposed for these bills, and, Mr. Speaker, I do request the concurrence of the Assembly in this report.

THE SPEAKER: Will all hon. members in favour of the report, please say aye?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

head: Notices of Motions

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. RENNEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) I'm giving notice that tomorrow I will move that written questions appearing on the Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of written questions 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, and 196.

I'm also giving notice that tomorrow I will move that motions for returns appearing on the Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of motions for returns 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 120, 121, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, and finally 195.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Do you have a tabling?

MR. HAVELOCK: Oh, pardon me. Yes. Thank you. I was too busy conversing with my colleague across the way, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to table this afternoon five copies of my letter to the MLA for Edmonton-Norwood dated April 13, 1999, relating to questions raised yesterday regarding sterilization claims and contingency agreements.

1:40

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today

in this Assembly and table the 1998-99 annual report for the constituency of Edmonton-Riverview. Included in this report is information about the operation and administration of the constituency, communication and research projects undertaken, and an accounting of how the constituency budget was spent.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS LEBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. The first is a copy of the letter from Dr. Rollie Nichol, the president of the Alberta Medical Association, to the members of that association wherein he indicates that the AMA was "blindsided by the introduction of Bill 7," that "Bill 7 has dealt a body blow to our trust and goodwill," and that "it is the perfect move to alienate and to anger physicians."

The second tabling that I have this afternoon is with regards to an amendment that will be proposed by the Liberal opposition to Bill 22. It is an amendment that seeks to rectify the provision that will allow unregulated workers to perform restricted activities and is of grave concern, especially to the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I'd like to table five copies of a March 4, 1999, letter from Corrinne Christopherson of Grande Prairie. The letter expresses her concern regarding the loss of her WCB pension upon remarriage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my constituents of Fort McMurray I would like to table today copies of a petition with respect to Bill 20.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Family and Social Services.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I am tabling a document that is the responses we have received back on important information about proposed changes to AISH and assured support. There are 1,010 responses with a 98 percent approval rating.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter to Mr. Fleming and the staff and students at Austin O'Brien high school congratulating him on behalf of the constituents of Edmonton-Gold Bar for raising over \$17,000 for international relief efforts.

Thank you.

MS BARRETT: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table five copies of a letter signed by several Albertans who are all teachers, I understand, and who object to the provision of Bill 20 in its intent to eliminate the Board of Reference.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly another championship team from the University of Alberta. With us today seated in the members' gallery are members of the University of Alberta Golden Bears hockey team. This year they won their 39th Canada West championship and their ninth national championship. This year's performance by our University of Alberta athletes is unprecedented: out of 18 U of A teams 16 traveled to national championship tournaments and eight earned medals, including three gold, four silver, and one bronze. Not only are these outstanding athletes, they are smart ones. Last year the U of A led the country with 79 academic all-Canadians and has done so for seven of the last eight years. Together with the Canada West coach of the year, Rob Daum, and assistant coach, Eric Thurston, and the captains of the national champion U of A Golden Bears hockey team, I would ask the U of A Golden Bears hockey team to rise and receive the warm welcome and congratulations of this House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

MRS. NELSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure for me to rise today and introduce to you and to Members of the Legislative Assembly two individuals who have assumed leading roles in the implementation of the province's new tourism marketing framework. I'd like to introduce Mr. Bryon Dickie, the senior manager of sales and marketing for the Calgary Olympic Development Association. He is the industry co-chair of the new 17-member Strategic Tourism Marketing Council. Joining him in the members' gallery is Patrick Gedge, who has recently, in fact this week, been appointed to assume the role of managing director of the Travel Alberta Secretariat. I'd ask that both these gentlemen rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister responsible for children's services.

MS CALAHASEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour for me today to introduce to you 73 bright young people who are here from the excellent Roland Michener secondary school located in Slave Lake on the beautiful shores of Lesser Slave, otherwise known as the jewel of the north. They are seated in the members' gallery and are accompanied by three teachers, Miss Tracey Crain, Mrs. Pauline Auger, Ms Heidi Martin, and eight parents and helpers: Ms Shelley Gullion, Mrs. Barbara Sparks, Mrs. Penny Yacimec, Ms Amel Abdal, Mrs. Corinne Oslund, Mrs. Paulette Ward, Mrs. Michelle Armella, Ms Sylvia Mitchell. I'd ask that they all rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature members of the Sikh community who are joining us here today to celebrate the birth of Khalsa, the 300 years of Sikhism. They are representatives from the Mill Woods Cultural Society of Retired and Semi-Retired, the Sikh Federation, the Khalsa Tercentenary Celebrations Committee, the Singh Sabha Gurdwara, and also the Canadian Citizenship Federation. I would like to particularly mention Mr. Jaswant Singh Atwal, who was instrumental in bringing everyone here with us today. Would they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Family and Social Services.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you 35 visitors from Duchess, Alberta. We have 25 grade 6 students plus teacher Ms Joyce Evans and parent helpers Kathy Irwin, Chris Smith, Frances Tobler, Kelly Conacher, Rosie Snyder, Ann McMahon, Janice Rommens, Mavis Deans, and Tracey Palaschak. I'd like them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly two individuals: Mr. Cal Dakin, a forester involved in environmental protection, and Dr. Elaine Chapelle, the executive director of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. I'd ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Labour.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a member of the 1967 University of Calgary Dinosaurs hockey club that went 0 and 4 against the University of Alberta, I stand here in admiration of their accomplishments. Also, having played some hockey in Red Deer and Rocky Mountain House, it gives me great pleasure to introduce on behalf of the Member for Rocky Mountain House a wonderful school, St. Matthews school, from which there are 28 students led by teachers Mr. Darren Brick and Mrs. Tracy Sugden and accompanied by parents Marna Overwater, Darlene Levitt, and Mr. Tyler Cadrain. I would ask all to stand and receive the warm and traditional welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislative Assembly Ms Ashley Doran. Ms Doran is a grade 10 student at Victoria Composite high school, and I'm proud to say that she is representing Edmonton-Gold Bar in Mr. Speaker's Alberta Youth Parliament this week. I would ask her to please rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly. She's up in the public gallery.

head: Ministerial Statements

1:50

**Holocaust Remembrance Day  
300th Anniversary of Khalsa**

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge two separate events of enormous spiritual and cultural significance, both being commemorated today across the world.

Today is Yom Hashoah, a Holocaust Remembrance Day, a day when the lives of 6 million European Jews and others who perished during the Holocaust of World War II are remembered. Yom Hashoah is a day of sorrow for people of Jewish faith and for all people who value the sanctity of human life. In reflecting on the violent, senseless deaths of the Holocaust, we are reminded that each person who suffered was an individual, a person with dignity, with purpose, with meaning.

But we must not let ourselves be consumed by sorrow. Holocaust Remembrance Day also serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of tolerance and respect for all faiths and cultures,

characteristics that are the cornerstones of a civilized society. If we dedicate ourselves to keeping alive the memories of those who perished and to continuing to teach young people about the perils of ideologies of hate, then the people who suffered will not have suffered in vain.

Last October I had the honour of visiting Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem. Our Premier has also visited Yad Vashem. While there I was invited to lay a wreath at the hall of remembrance and sign the commemorative book of remembrance at the children's memorial. This was a powerful experience for me, Mr. Speaker. An estimated 1.5 million children were among the victims of the Holocaust, and Jewish people of all ages suffered untold misery at the hands of the Nazi regime.

I urge all members of this Assembly and all Albertans to pause today and reach out in compassion and understanding to our friends and neighbours of Jewish faith. Perhaps we cannot fully understand their grief, but we can express to them our deep sorrow and our commitment to keep working with them to ensure that such an event never again mars the record of human history.

Mr. Speaker, today also marks a very important day across the globe. Today is Baisakhi Day, a day of tremendous spiritual and historical significance to Sikhs and the beginning of a year-long worldwide celebration of the 300th anniversary of an important date in the history of the Sikh faith. Three hundred years ago a fraternity of brotherhood called Khalsa was formed and the tenets of modern Sikh faith established. The Khalsa is a body of people dedicated to the principles of justice, equality, and truth, the fundamental principles of the Sikh faith. Today as we prepare to enter a new century, the principles of the Sikh faith are as important, as relevant, and as vital as they were 300 years ago.

I understand that due to some differences in calendar usages, some Sikhs are celebrating the beginning of the 300th anniversary of the founding of Khalsa today, while others begin their commemoration tomorrow. Either way, this 300th anniversary is a most appropriate time for Albertans to learn more about the Sikh faith and to embrace Sikhs who live here in Alberta.

People of Sikh faith have been important members of our community since the early 1900s. Sikh communities have grown and prospered across the province, and Sikhs have brought leadership and great energy to the economic, cultural, and spiritual contributions that they have made to Alberta.

On behalf of this Assembly I send my best wishes to Sikhs living in Alberta as they mark this tremendous milestone. I hope that on this special occasion they will experience a renewal of faith and a rededication to the principles that have strengthened them, their families, and their communities for the past three centuries and more.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a resolution passed by the Knesset on April 12, 1951, this day was proclaimed as the Holocaust and ghetto uprising day of perpetual remembrance. This date was chosen for its significance: it falls between that of the beginning of the Warsaw ghetto uprising and the anniversary of the Israeli war of independence. Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, is the day during which all humanity is called upon to remember our potential for inhumanity and, ultimately, our triumph over evil.

Six million Jews were rounded up, dehumanized, tortured, and murdered, amongst them over 1 and one-half million children who were denied their birthright. The horrors and indignities suffered remain unparalleled and must never be forgotten. Today as innocent men and women and children face their own horrors of war in

various regions of the globe, we must all pause and try to learn from these brutal lessons of the past. We must keep the memories of those who have perished alive so as to remind us of the sanctity of life and the effort required to eliminate hate and to build enduring peace.

I join with the government of Alberta in commemorating Yom Hashoah. I, too, have had the opportunity to visit Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, and I have been touched by its power and its message. I hope all Albertans will find a moment today to reflect on how they may contribute to compassion and understanding and toward working to ensure that the 6 million who died did not die in vain. My thanks to the Edmonton Jewish community Holocaust Remembrance Committee for the work that they do.

Later during Routine my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie will rise and enter her comments marking the 300th anniversary of the birth of Khalsa.

Thank you.

head: Oral Question Period

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition. First main question.

### West Edmonton Mall Refinancing

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the Auditor General's report, the former Provincial Treasurer found out about the West Edmonton Mall refinancing deal in March of 1995. At the time he said, quote, I was mad; I advised Mr. Leahy that I would be considering his position with the Treasury Branches, close quote. For more than a year Mr. Leahy was kept on his job in spite of apparently committing the current government to a very bad business deal, one that leaves taxpayers with \$150 million in losses and \$410 million in risk. My questions are to the Premier. Was the Provincial Treasurer talked out of removing the acting superintendent when he became aware of the West Edmonton Mall deal?

MR. KLEIN: I really don't know. Mr. Speaker, I was not privy to any of those conversations. It's as simple as that.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, will the Premier tell Albertans why his government kept Mr. Leahy on for a year after it was discovered that taxpayers were put in such a negative position, already costing more than \$150 million in losses?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, it was no secret that Mr. Leahy was leaving, nor was it any secret that he was asked to stay on to see the ATB through a transition stage from a single manager situation to a board of governors.

2:00

Mr. Speaker, I allude to a news release that was sent out to all of the public dated April 4, 1996. It says:

Acting Superintendent of Alberta Treasury Branches Elmer Leahy, has informed Provincial Treasurer Jim Dinning, that he will retire from the financial institution after 35 years of service.

Elmer Leahy has been a capable Superintendent for the Treasury Branches and valuable employee for the past 35 years. His dedication and commitment to the job was appreciated as we moved to establishing the first Board of Directors for this financial institution.

This is the paragraph to which the hon. member alludes.

Leahy will remain with Alberta Treasury Branches until a new Superintendent is appointed. Elmer Leahy assumed the duties of Acting Superintendent in 1994.

So it was out there, very public, in a press release for all to see, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, we're seeking the reason for the delay.

Will the Premier, then, confirm that the reason for the delay in leaving and the generous severance package that went with it was to keep the deal quiet and to hide the details from the public?

MR. KLEIN: No, Mr. Speaker. That is absolute nonsense. If we wanted to keep it quiet, if we wanted to cover it up, the last thing we would have done would be to issue a news release.

Relative to the severance, the opposition states that if the government didn't know about the package, they were foolish. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll provide some background information relative to this situation. Mr. Leahy's severance package totaled \$123,833: \$104,166 for salary, \$16,600 in lieu of benefits, and \$3,000 in lieu of an automobile. The severance offer was signed by then Treasurer, Jim Dinning; Elmer Leahy; and then Deputy Minister of Executive Council, Vance MacNichol. This offer was not discussed at cabinet or Treasury Board. At the time, a Treasury Board directive was in place to allow authorization of severance offers by the Deputy Minister of Executive Council as long as the offer did not total more than one year of service.

Mr. Speaker, everything was in keeping with government policy at that time.

THE SPEAKER: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### **Calgary Regional Health Authority**

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Dr. John Morgan was appointed as the chair of the Calgary regional health authority only eight months ago. Dr. Morgan, however, has now departed from the government's agenda, and there have been consequences. He supported electing regional health authorities, he acknowledged that regional health authorities must be more open, and he openly criticized insufficient budget funding. But now he has suddenly been replaced. My questions are to the Premier. What form of recruitment and screening process did the government follow in making Dr. Morgan's appointment eight months ago?

MR. KLEIN: I would suggest that the normal appointment and screening process was followed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Morgan is a well-respected heart surgeon in the city of Calgary. He has extensive knowledge relative to not only the administration of medicine but medical administration per se and was a good choice.

Mr. Speaker, as the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition well knows, it was Dr. Morgan who asked for an internal examination of the operations of the Calgary regional health authority. That report was made public. It pointed out some problems. I think that Dr. Morgan will be the first to admit that some changes had to be made, and the minister is now taking the appropriate action to bring about those changes.

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, since the problems identified in the Calgary regional health authority organizational review are much older than eight months, why have Dr. Morgan and now others we find become the sacrificial lambs?

MR. KLEIN: They haven't become sacrificial lambs at all, Mr. Speaker. Dr. Morgan has agreed to stay on the board. I'm sure he'll be a valuable contributor to the board and will help see through the changes that need to be made.

Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition that the restructuring – restructuring, by the way, that the hon. member, when she was Minister of Health, failed to undertake or failed to carry out – that has taken place to regionalize some 200 health jurisdictions into 17 was no easy task. Yes, when you undertake dramatic change to bring about efficiencies and to run a more streamlined system, there are going to be some hitches, and we're working our way through these. That's why the internal review was done. The internal review recommended some changes. The minister is taking the appropriate action to bring about those changes.

MRS. MacBETH: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, since it was this Premier who broke his promise to elect regional health authority board members supposedly in order to avoid disruptive changes, how does he justify this change only eight months after Dr. Morgan's appointment?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all, I haven't broken my promise. I said that we would delay the election. The elections are still on tap, on schedule in conjunction with the municipal elections – what? – two and a half years from now, and that will happen.

Mr. Speaker, I'm curious as to why the hon. member would be raising these objections. We have put in place as the new chairman Jim Dinning. I mean, they were friends. They were buddies. He was a big supporter of the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition when she ran for the leadership of the Conservative Party. I mean, they were friends. They were buddies. Now she's objecting.

THE SPEAKER: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my way or the highway should be the theme song for this government's approach to the delivery of health care services. This government continues to demonstrate that regional health authorities are anything but independent of political interference. Today it became very clear that the major qualifications for any prospective chair of a regional health authority is whether they will toe the party line and sing from the same song sheet. My questions are to the Premier. How can Calgarians trust the master of cutbacks, the former Provincial Treasurer, Mr. Dinning, and the Premier's former spin doctor, Rod Love, to improve a health care system that they were so instrumental in destroying?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm shocked; I am absolutely astounded that the Liberal Party would be objecting to the appointment of Jim Dinning. I mean, after all, Jim Dinning, as I pointed out, was a buddy, a close, close friend of the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition. Is that any way to treat a friend?

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Dinning has never been a friend of mine.

Why would this Premier appoint Mr. Dinning, who is on record as saying that hospitals should be built, owned, and operated by private businesses?

MR. KLEIN: I don't know if that was a comment or a question, but, Mr. Speaker, again I really find it strange that they would object to this appointment. I mean, after all, the leader of the Liberal opposition turned down the job of Provincial Treasurer so her friend Jim Dinning could have it.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is it just coincidence that Mr. Dinning, the Premier's champion of privatization, is now parachuted into the Calgary regional health authority at the very same time that this government is preparing to allow for private, for-profit hospitals? Is that coincidental?

2:10

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is the wrong assumption.

I'll tell you something about Mr. Dinning, and the hon. Leader of the Opposition would know this. He is a very capable individual. He steered this government through one of the most difficult times, when we were running deficits of something like \$3.4 billion a year and massive restructuring had to take place and we had to bring our books into balance. We had to put in a program for the orderly pay-down of the debt. We had to find new and better and more effective and more efficient ways of doing things. Mr. Dinning proved himself to be a very, very good administrator and a very good Treasurer whose responsibility was to bring about most of these changes. That's why today we are deemed to be the healthiest jurisdiction, not only in Canada but in North America.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader of the ND opposition, followed by the hon. Member for Wainwright.

MS BARRETT: Jim Dinning: author of the legislation, supported by the Liberals and Conservatives, that said that if any money is left over from the budget, it could only be applied exclusively to the debt, not to health care and education; orchestrator of the wrecking ball that knocked down the Calgary General hospital – this is what's left of it – closed two other hospitals; laid off thousands of frontline workers. And this government wants us to trust him to be in charge of the regional health authorities? Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: how can the Premier justify appointing his former Provincial Treasurer, whose track record I've already enumerated, if not so that Jim Dinning can finish the job of selling off what's left of Calgary's public health care system?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dinning was the architect of a multibillion-dollar turnaround in this government. I know that the private sector is a dirty word to the hon. leader of the New Democrats, but I can tell you that had Mr. Dinning been in the private sector and had he brought about the same turnaround as he brought about in government, I don't think there would be a vault big enough to hold his bonus cheque. I'm telling you, he did one fantastic job: eliminating a \$3.4 billion annual structural deficit, paying down the debt by more than \$8 billion, being part of the team that restructured health and education to make it more effective and more efficient and bring about a situation where Alberta has been named time and time again the most prudent, financially responsible government, not only in Canada but in North America.

MS BARRETT: The Premier forgot one thing. He shut half the hospital beds in Edmonton and Calgary.

Who in the Calgary health system, besides the government's own cronies, did the government consult prior to parachuting Jim Dinning into this powerful position?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Dinning knows the system. He knows the system inside and out. He was a minister of career development and employment, I believe – at that time it was a portfolio – and community health. He was the Minister of Education. He was the Provincial Treasurer. He was also a deputy minister. I think he was an executive assistant. This man has spent

his life in both the administrative and the political sides of government. He wanted a new challenge. You will find out in about one month . . .

MRS. SLOAN: What does he know about health care?

MR. KLEIN: What does he know about hospitals? He knows as much about hospitals as he proved to know about the finances of this province and how to bring them back into control. That's what he knows.

MS BARRETT: At untold human expense, one might add.

How can the government on the one hand claim that regional health authorities are responsible for running our public health care system while on the other hand firing any board that doesn't follow its political agenda and then replacing them with Tory insiders like Jim Dinning?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, it's not a matter of any board following a political agenda. There are no political agendas relative to the administration of regional health authorities. But there is a policy. The Liberals would have this policy and the NDs if they ever became the government – if, and that's a very, very big if, and it's a big if for these guys too. If they ever, it would be a matter of policy that any administration that depends on government funding for their operations would have to operate in an effective and efficient manner, and it is the responsibility of the government to make sure that that happens. When it's not happening, we have to move in and take the appropriate steps to make sure that these systems, these institutions do indeed run effectively and efficiently.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wainwright, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

### Nurses' Collective Bargaining

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The union representing registered nurses employed in Alberta hospitals is currently in collective bargaining with the Provincial Health Authorities of Alberta. All Albertans are concerned by reports that the nurses' union and the employers are still far apart in what they're looking for in salaries and in benefits. My question is to the Premier. With the parties this far apart what can the government do to ensure that Albertans are not subjected to the situation experienced recently in Newfoundland and at this moment in Saskatchewan?

MR. KLEIN: Well, first of all, the government doesn't become directly involved in the negotiations. This is a matter between the RHAs and the nurses' union, Mr. Speaker. I will tell you that last February I met with all of the unions and all of the administrators in the so-called municipalities, universities, schools, hospitals sector, MUSH, MASH, HUMS, HAMS, whatever you want to call the sector. At that time I said that we needed to maintain a balance between our revenues and our expenditures. I indicated – and it was clearly outlined by Professor Paul Boothe – that the revenue picture allowed for significant reinvestment in the areas of health and education, and that reinvestment has taken place.

We also said and pointed out quite clearly that over 60 percent of all expenditures in the area of municipalities, universities, schools, and hospitals are for salaries, and the more money that goes for salaries, the less will have to go for services. It's a simple mathematical fact. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure it out.

Mr. Speaker, I can't get involved and I won't get involved as the

government in the negotiations directly, but clearly the message is there: let's try to be fair; let's try – I'm talking to the RHA, and I'm talking to the nurses' union – to arrive at something that can be negotiated that is fair.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you. To the Minister of Labour. The great majority of nurses do not have the legal right to strike, but their union has already started collecting \$30 a month in extra dues from their members. Is the union collecting additional money to pay strike fines, and does the union have the legal right to charge its members additional fees at will?

MR. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, the union constitution and the bylaws that are set out give them the ability to follow that, and for any member who believes that the process does not follow the constitution and the bylaws, their recourse may also be described in the union constitution and bylaws.

I don't know why they're being collected. I hear comments from former nurses that they may be used for other reasons, but I also see the media use the words "war chest." Mr. Speaker, as the Premier said, there are ample, ample opportunities for a negotiated, mutually agreeable settlement, agreed to by both parties, that could come to bear on this agreement in Alberta.

2:20

MR. FISCHER: Thank you. To the Minister of Labour again: can the minister please inform this House what his department is prepared to do to assist the parties to reach some kind of an agreement to avoid the very ugly strike situation where everyone loses?

MR. SMITH: Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all we'll do everything in our power. Whatever we can do, we'll certainly do. Certainly as the Premier has pointed out, this is an agreement that must be struck between the Provincial Health Authorities of Alberta, which is the Provincial Mental Health Board and the health authorities, with the nurses. We know that they're going to bargain in good faith. We hope that they're going to bargain in good faith.

We do have assistance, as we did before, Mr. Speaker, in the area of mediation and arbitration. We will provide a skilled mediator, one that's very familiar with the issues. As we have with other essential service workers, if the parties are unable to conclude an agreement, which I would hope would not happen, there is an arbitration provision in the legislation. It is never anyone's preferred choice and is only in the absence of a negotiated settlement.

Again, we hope that we can do everything we can do with the power of the legislation and the labour act to ensure that a negotiated settlement does take place without interfering with the care, without incurring additional costs for removing people from hospital. All these perceived threats and all these media reported activities really take away from the money that's available to put on the table for settlement, and I know that they're going to work hard at being able to conclude a successful settlement, as they did in 1997, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

### Calgary Regional Health Authority

(continued)

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Paul Rushforth is going; Dr. Morgan steps down; Jim Dinning and Rod Love are moving into the CRHA. Now, we've seen what Mr. Dinning knows about finances, but my question to the Premier: would he particular-

ize specifically what Mr. Jim Dinning knows about delivering necessary health care services to the 800,000 people in region 4?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, he hasn't been appointed. The OC has to go through yet. He is the chair. The chair. Now, we have 17 regional health authorities, and all of the chairpersons are people from all walks of life. I mean, this hon. member, the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, could conceivably be the chair of a regional health authority when he gets out of politics after the next election. Conceivably he could become the chair, and what does he know about running a hospital? I would say absolutely nothing.

Mr. Speaker, the chair is there to provide leadership and to develop policy. It is a matter then for the administration of the hospital, the professionals, to carry out the policy, and the policy relative to the RHA and every other health authority in this province is to provide quality health care in an effective and efficient manner. Those are the policies. It is then up to the administration to carry out the policies.

I was elected mayor of the city of Calgary in 1980. I knew absolutely nothing about being the mayor.

MRS. FORSYTH: You did a good job, though.

MR. KLEIN: Yes, I did a very good job, at least I think so. I knew what needed to be done to have a well-run city, and I knew that I had a trusted administration that could carry out the duties and the policies to make sure that the city was well run, Mr. Speaker. That's what chairmanship is all about. That's what leadership is all about.

MR. DICKSON: My supplementary question is this: since there is not now enough money in the Calgary region for a new veterans' facility, not enough money for the 300 hospital beds desperately needed, not enough money for a host of other things, how much will Mr. Rushforth's severance package cost Alberta taxpayers, Mr. Premier?

MR. KLEIN: I have no idea, Mr. Speaker, and I haven't been informed officially that Mr. Rushforth has left. I have heard secondhand, now thirdhand, that that indeed has happened. Certainly the only announcement that was made by the minister today was the announcement as it affected the chair of the Calgary regional health authority.

Mr. Speaker, relative to the lack of money, again I have to go back to the two press releases that were issued, one on March 10, 1999, where the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition says that

"the unrelenting pressure these individuals [that is the public] and the Official Opposition put on government MLAs was the key to getting much needed funding back into health care and education," said MacBeth.

Then the next day while they're talking about spend, spend, spend, and spend some more, the next day the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition says: "How can this government throw money with reckless abandon at health care and education . . ." Is she the same Liberal? I just have to wonder.

MR. DICKSON: My final question, Mr. Speaker, is again to the Premier. Since the identified major need in the Calgary region is stability – stability in governance, stability in funding – why is it that at the news conference that was simply 40 minutes ago at the Metropolitan Centre in Calgary the new chair, Mr. Dinning, announced that there was a transition team but that the activity of the transition team would be in secret, would not be shared with the media, would not be shared with members of the public? Why are we playing this sort of game, Mr. Premier?

MR. KLEIN: It's not a game, Mr. Speaker. It's very, very serious business. It's very serious business that certainly doesn't deserve the kinds of tactics for which the Alberta Liberal Party has become quite notorious, and that is to try and throw a monkey wrench into everything wherever they possibly can. This is serious business, and they need the time and the privacy to get this job done without the political interference of the Alberta Liberal Party.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

### Homelessness

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, last Friday the Task Force on Homelessness in Edmonton heard 22 excellent presentations from the public, including numerous community and service agencies. Presenters in fact urged all governments at all levels to work co-operatively and with the private sector and the community to identify existing policies, review them, and also identify creative solutions regarding the homeless and those in need of affordable housing. My questions are to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. Given that the Department of Municipal Affairs held an Alberta housing symposium to address the shortage of affordable housing in Edmonton and elsewhere, what actions have now been implemented arising from that specific symposium?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, one of the actions from the symposium is in fact to fund a trust fund for this city so that the nonprofits, the community associations, the private sector, groups like the Coalition for the Homeless can get together and use those funds, deploy those funds in a fashion that will allow them to secure yet additional funding and be able to assess the needs, first of all, and then support those needs of those that need accommodation.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to looking after the needs of those that are truly and genuinely without other resources, and through this particular initiative we have given \$50,000 within the last few weeks so that they are able to establish that trust fund. That is one of the initiatives.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to hear that because we heard that comment over and over about a trust fund, and I'm wondering if the minister could just elaborate a little bit as she understands the trust fund, how the mechanics of that could work, so I'd have some good news to report back to these presenters in that regard.

2:30

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, within Canada the use of a trust fund for this purpose is not well understood. There are models in the United States that have worked quite well.

As I understand it, the trust fund itself is administered by a board of trustees that are accountable to those that provide funds. It is not unlike the initiative that has been undertaken by Mr. Art Smith in Calgary, but it is in fact in this circumstance an initiative with the people that are part of the greater Edmonton builders.

The foundation itself will be comprised of trustees who will set out criteria, a business plan, very definite targeted goals and objectives and use the funds themselves for leverage to access other resources available through the community. There is a co-ordinator who has recently been retained, and there will be, in fact, some work done that will be preliminary to release of the funds for actual activity that will take place.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since I'm co-

chairing the Task Force on Homelessness here in Edmonton, where our rental vacancy rate for affordable housing and other housing is down to around 1 percent, I wonder if the minister could tell us how soon we might expect such a trust fund, this incentive that it provides, to become fully functional in the city of Edmonton and whether or not it may be a suitable model for application elsewhere in other Alberta cities.

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it today, there are legal documents that are being drawn up. A board of trustees will be appointed. The working committee is setting that in motion. Following the development and approval of the business plan and the marketing plan, it's anticipated that these activities will be complete in late summer, and then the funds will be released and activity will begin. This idea has been gaining some momentum. The city of Calgary, the city of Red Deer, and Fort McMurray/Wood Buffalo have expressed interest in a similar model. So as we get more information and updates, not only through this group but others through other communities, we will be bringing that information forward.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

### School Fees and Fund-raising

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government continues to claim that school grants cover instructional materials and textbook costs, yet the cash-strapped Calgary board of education has proposed a new fee for all students to, in part, pay for textbooks. My questions are to the Minister of Education. If school grants are sufficient, why are Calgary parents being forced to pay this new instructional resource fee?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, the legislation, the School Act, permits by regulation school boards to have the ability to develop policies with respect to learning resource fees. It is a matter that the local school board has control over. This is not anything that's new to school boards throughout the province. It is a decision that is made by the board and will be made by the board, and the board accordingly will have to be accountable to the parents who pay these instructional resource fees. Again, this is a long-standing ability that school boards have had, and school boards have from time to time availed themselves of this ability to do this by their own policies.

DR. MASSEY: To the same minister: if school grants are sufficient, then why is there such a provision in the School Act?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is quite interesting to note that with respect to textbooks there are a number of different things that are done by various school boards. Some school boards will charge a learning resource fee. Some will charge textbook rental. Some will charge a deposit. It's interesting to me to note that in the case where school boards do implement these types of learning resource fees and then perhaps in some cases have a returnable deposit, the books are actually maintained in much better shape than they would be if the books were simply given to students.

So, Mr. Speaker, the various iterations of these policies are decisions made by school boards, and I think there are good reasons why school boards implement those types of policies from time to time. Again, it is an accountability that the school board has to its electors to come up with the reasons why they've implemented such a policy.



DR. MASSEY: Thank you. To the same minister: even with this new fee John Ware junior high school parents are working casinos to pay for textbooks and other what they call school essentials. My question to the minister is: why?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, school councils, parents should not be fund-raising for basics. With respect to raising money for textbooks, I refer the hon. member to the review that was done of the Calgary board of education. There were a very small percentage of school councils that had reported that they were fund-raising for things like textbooks. If that is the case, then those school councils must hold their trustees accountable for why they're being asked to raise money for textbooks. It's very clear in the Calgary board of education review that the issue of raising money for textbooks was very, very low on the list of concerns that people had.

Just on the subject of sufficiency of the basic instructional grant, Mr. Speaker, separate and apart from money for administration or transportation or plant operations and maintenance, I remind the hon. member that the instructional grant for simply instructional materials and resources is approximately \$4,000 per student. So what is allocated to school boards is over \$100,000 for a classroom size of 26.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-West, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

#### Sites for Future Schools

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the Minister of Education. In the constituency of Calgary-West there are parcels of land that have been designated for use as a school sometime in the future. Since school boards need to make better use of existing facilities prior to being approved for new facilities, some questions have been raised as to why there are so many parcels of land designated as sites for future schools. Can the Minister of Education explain to the Assembly how these sites are designated and who's responsible for them?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the Municipal Government Act there is a provision that states that a percentage of land in every subdivision must be set aside for municipal and school reserve, a part of which can be used for future schools. This provision is in the act to ensure that there is adequate land set aside in the event that there is ever a need for a school to be built in a particular community. The exact location of the parcel of land for reserves and the maintenance of it rests with the city and the local school boards.

I am advised that there is a joint-use agreement between the city of Calgary and the two school boards, public and Catholic. That agreement, I'm advised, Mr. Speaker, has been working very well. That is the agreement pursuant to which a mechanism exists for the three parties to control the reserves.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, that first question had absolutely nothing to do with the administrative competence of the government of Alberta. Would you carefully craft your second question?

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my first supplemental is to the same minister. New communities have a need to balance new development with the need for green space. Can arrangements be made to utilize this land as green space until such time as it is required to build new schools?

MR. MAR: The answer, Mr. Speaker, is yes. A municipal govern-

ment with agreement from the local school board can turn a parcel of land designated as school reserve into a park or a play area, but again this is a decision that's made at the local level.

MS KRYCZKA: Mr. Speaker, my final question is to the same minister. How do local citizens proceed if they'd like to see a vacant parcel of land designated as school reserve used for green space?

THE SPEAKER: Well, you'll have to ask that question before the city of Calgary.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, followed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

#### Prince Rupert Grain Terminal

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the Provincial Treasurer. Will the Treasurer confirm that the Prince Rupert grain terminal will remain shut down until this fall due to a lack of grain volume?

MR. DAY: There has been some shutdown there, Mr. Speaker, that's part of their normal business agreement. If they don't have the throughput, then they have to look at when they'll be shut down.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you. Will the Treasurer confirm that the shutdown at the Prince Rupert grain terminal for the next seven months will mean the deferral of over \$20 million in principal and interest payments owed this year to taxpayers through the heritage savings trust fund?

2:40

MR. DAY: They've been up to date on their payments so far, Mr. Speaker, and we'll have to see what this shutdown bears. We haven't received an official notice of that though.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, will the Treasurer inform the Assembly when the government will be re-entering negotiations with the consortium that owns the Prince Rupert grain terminal so that Alberta taxpayers can recover their entire \$251 million investment in this grain terminal?

MR. DAY: Well, the agreement itself, Mr. Speaker, as many people know, does have a termination date to it, at which point if there are deferrals, then all interest and principal has to be forthcoming. The agreement is in place. There's been no violation of the agreement, and there is no formal recognition, at least to my knowledge, at this point of the principals requesting a formal reconsideration. We'd be open to that process, I suppose, but not to the detriment of the taxpayers' position on this particular facility.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

#### Special-needs Education

MR. MARZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I've received concerns from some schools in my constituency regarding the apparent lack of policy regarding special-needs funding following the student. At the present time if a student is transferred in midterm, the receiving board is placed in a difficult economic position because they have not been receiving any funding. My question to the Minister of Education is: could the minister please explain the current policy or practice regarding midterm transfers of special-needs students?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, funding is provided to school boards based on a student count that is done on September 30 of each school year. Programs are designed by school boards and by schools, and staff are hired on the basis of the September 30 count and the funding that follows thereafter. If a student does leave a program after that date, the board from which the student has left does not necessarily have reduced costs, but over a period of time our experience has been that, generally speaking, students transferring in and students transferring out balance each other out.

With respect to special-needs funding to boards, it is also calculated, Mr. Speaker, on a per student basis. Boards then pool this funding and allocate it to meet the needs of their student populations. In some cases there have been school boards that make arrangements among and between themselves to from time to time transfer money in the event that there is a student that is moved in midyear.

MR. MARZ: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: how much funding do boards currently receive for special-needs students?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I'll require some latitude because there are a number of different categories of students. Of the basic student instruction grant, \$335 is targeted to students with mild and moderate disabilities or for students who are gifted and talented, and based on the incidence rate of 10 percent, this would translate to \$3,350 per eligible student.

At the present time also, Mr. Speaker, boards receive \$11,600 for each student with a severe physical or mental disability. Combined with the basic instructional grant rate of \$3,860, this would equate to \$15,460 for each of those students.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the category of students with severe emotional and behavioural disabilities, they are funded at the rate of \$8,910. Boards would accordingly receive a total of \$12,770 for each of those students when combined with the basic instructional grant rate of \$3,860.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'd point out that the rates for all of these students, including the basic instructional grant rate, will be going up by 3 percent in September of this year and 2 percent in each of the following two years.

MR. MARZ: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my last question is again to the same minister. Would the minister at this time consider implementing a policy requiring school boards to transfer special-needs funding on a prorated basis when a student is transferred?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, a two-count system where the school boards would count the number of students that they have on September 30 of the school year and then count again at the commencement of the second semester might alleviate some of their funding concerns. In fact, a two-count system was employed prior to 1995. However, it was school jurisdictions that requested a return to the one-count system because it benefited them financially and allowed their funding to remain consistent and predictable throughout the year.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

#### **Teachers' Board of Reference**

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are regarding this government's clumsy attempt to eliminate the

teachers' Board of Reference. My first question is to the Minister of Education. Given that the minister didn't bother consulting with teachers before he moved to eliminate the Board of Reference, has he at least had the decency to consult with and listen to teachers since?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, on two occasions I've met with the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association, Bauni Mackay. I can advise the House that Ms Mackay is somebody that I have a great deal of respect for, and she has raised a number of issues that I think are meritorious of consideration. It's my undertaking to continue to work with stakeholder groups in dealing with some of the issues that I think are legitimate concerns that have been raised by Ms Mackay.

I'd also point out, Mr. Speaker, that the new president-elect of the Alberta Teachers' Association, Mr. Larry Booi, is also somebody that is personally known to me and is somebody that I have respect for. I expect that when that transition takes place, I would also meet with Mr. Booi on the same subject.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my second and final question is also to the Minister of Education. Will the minister now do the right thing and withdraw the sections of Bill 20 that would eliminate the teacher's Board of Reference?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, again, I've indicated that there are some concerns that have been raised by members of the ATA and in particular by their leader, president Mackay. My commitment is to continue to work with that so we can deal with the issues that have been raised that I think are legitimate concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I point out that the purpose of the elimination of the Board of Reference is to indicate that teachers should have the same rights as other professionals who work under a collective bargaining process. It is an elimination of a duplication of services that is being dealt with here. Again, Ms Mackay has very appropriately represented her membership, and we'd like to deal with the issues that she's raised.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

#### **North/South Corridor through Edmonton**

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are hearing much regarding the Canamex north/south trade corridor, which will, incidentally, run through the city of Edmonton. This is a very important trade corridor crossing three countries and of course is an economic boon to Alberta. It will require Edmonton to enhance its north/south corridor, land for which was set aside some years ago by the province. My questions are all to the minister of transportation. What portion of the north/south trade corridor is the province funding within the city of Edmonton boundaries?

MR. PASZKOWSKI: The portions of the corridor that are within the city of Edmonton are indeed eligible for cost sharing. To date we've shared on a 90-10 basis. We've contributed some \$55 million of funding on the 90-10 basis to the extension of the Anthony Henday Drive from Stony Plain Road to the Yellowhead Trail. We have currently under construction this coming year two major interchanges: the Calgary Trail/Ellerslie one as well as the Winterburn/Yellowhead Trail interchange.

In addition, there is the \$10 million that Municipal Affairs has provided for the regional co-ordination grant, and this indeed is allowing for the continued extension of Whitemud Drive to 45th

Avenue. Over the long term we intend to participate with the city in the development of the entire southwest ring road from Whitemud Drive right on through to Calgary Trail. This is a major part of the north/south corridor and one that we see as a major linkage which will deal with the profound traffic that's developing in the city of Edmonton as well. Consequently, we consider this a very important linkage that has to be built as we develop the north/south corridor.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, that is certainly good news for Edmonton. My last and my only supplemental is to the same minister. Mr. Minister, when will the province commit funds for the very necessary 23rd Avenue bridge on Anthony Henday Drive?

2:50

MR. PASZKOWSKI: First of all, we have to clarify that the reference to the 23rd Avenue bridge is in fact a new bridge. This is not an existing bridge. This is going to be the development of a new structure. So this would be, again, in the development of the southwest ring road. Construction of the bridge will be reviewed as part of the north/south trade corridor agreement. The general intent is to complete the Whitemud Drive and Calgary Trail extension, which includes the bridge, by the way, hopefully in the area of 2005.

Having said that, we're always open to partnerships, and we're always open to agreements similar to the one that we did with the Calgary Airport Authority on 96th Avenue. Indeed, in that case we were able to expedite the entire process. So if indeed we're able to successfully negotiate a partnership agreement, we certainly would be able to expedite this process as well.

head: Members' Statements

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, in 30 seconds from now I'll call on the first of three members today to present their Member's Statement. We'll begin first of all with the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore in 30 seconds.

### Holocaust Remembrance Day

MR. STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to join with all members of this Assembly to recognize the importance of Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, which is being marked around the world today. Holocaust Remembrance Day is an annual occasion for the world to reflect upon the horrors and the lessons of the Holocaust, in which 6 million European Jews perished during World War II.

It's almost too difficult to imagine the scope and the breadth of this human tragedy, yet there are many alive today, including many Albertans, who can recall all too well the unspeakable cruelty and fanaticism visited upon European Jews during the Nazi era. They can recall the pogroms, the families ripped apart, the properties seized, the losses of homes and histories and lives. To these Albertans and to their friends and loved ones, I extend the hand of friendship, of sorrow, and of compassion. I ask them to continue the work they do to teach younger Albertans about the importance of never relaxing our vigil against evil. Recent events in Europe serve to remind us all too well that only 54 years after the Holocaust, the international community can never assume that the persecution of entire peoples will not occur.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans of Jewish faith around the province come together today, along with Albertans of many other faiths, to remember and commemorate the losses of the Holocaust. In my home city of Calgary services of song and kaddish, or mourning prayer, have been organized around the theme of A Child Remem-

bers: Songs from my Youth. The focus of this year's service is on the children who perished in the Holocaust as well as on those who endured and survived. The lives and memories of individual children will be recalled and honoured during the service. This is sure to be a touching and powerful tribute.

I encourage all members of this Assembly to take some time today to attend Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremonies in their communities and to celebrate the courage and spirit of those who perished.

Thank you.

### 300th Anniversary of Khalsa

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Legislative Assembly I would like to congratulate the Sikh community on the birth of Khalsa, created in 1699. Sikhs around the world will be celebrating 300 years, the tercentenary, on April 14, 1999.

Sikhism is based on religious and social values believing in nonviolence. It was created at a time of need in India to challenge the tyranny of Moghul rulers, to fight intolerance, and to help those in misery. The symbols of the Khalsa were introduced by Guru Gobind Singh and are called the five kakkars: kish, long uncut hair giving Sikhs a unique and distinctive appearance, a symbol of God's gifts; a kirpan, or sword, a symbol of spiritual power and respect; a kangha, or comb, to show tidiness and discipline; a kachha, a pair of short trousers to show readiness for action; and a kara, a steel bracelet, a symbol of unity and faith. This guru also gave the Khalsa a common surname, Singh, or lion, and the women a common middle name, Kaur, or princess.

The code of conduct for Sikhs is based on a theme of simplicity of habits, humility of temper, truthfulness of disposition, earnings through honest labour, and sharing with the needy.

Today we have amongst our visitors an elder who is an excellent example of the Khalsa: Jaswant Singh Atwal. Mr. Atwal graduated with a BA in education from the Punjab university in 1938. He migrated to Canada in 1982 and has been a Canadian citizen since 1986. Since coming here, he has dedicated his life to the community and has been receiving awards for this service since 1990. He has been recognized at all three levels of government and within the Sikh community for his contribution to social and health issues and his translation abilities. One example of his service is that since 1993 he has contributed 1,500 volunteer hours to the Grey Nuns hospital.

To Mr. Atwal, who is a living example of the Khalsa, we say happy birthday. He turned 80 on April 10, 1999. To members of the Sikh community who have joined us today and around the world we say: Wah-i-Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wah-i-Guru-Ji-Ki-Fateh, or the Khalsa are chosen of God, and victory be to our God.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort.

### Truong Nguyen Cao

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to say thank you to you, Mr. Speaker, and our Premier, my colleagues in the Legislature, the staff, and all my friends. Your messages of condolence and flower wreaths and personal cards are very much appreciated by all 47 members of my extended family living in North America. My eldest brother, Truong Nguyen Cao, passed away very suddenly in his own home in Hacienda Heights city in California. Your condolences were expressed at his funeral service in California. Your condolences have bridged a gap, the emptiness caused by the loss of our dear one.

I would like to tell you briefly about Truong. He was the eldest in a family of four brothers and a sister, born into a family with strong public service principles. Just as he was ready for college studies, he

was drafted into the armed forces. He graduated at the top of his class in a military officer academy. He fought during the Vietnam war. In the rank of colonel he left the battlefield on the very last day of the war. In his civilian life in California he studied and graduated from Mount San Antonio College and California State Polytechnic University. He went back to public service as a staff supervisor for the department of social services in Los Angeles county for 20 years.

He had visited Alberta and very much enjoyed our province, the hospitality of its people, and the magnificent landscape. He even talked about the idea of moving to Calgary to live in his retirement. He encouraged and supported me in serving the public good and running for an honourable elected office in our Legislature.

Indeed, when I came to his office in L.A. county to collect his personal belongings, I saw a package of documents addressed to me. It contained the successful social programs and initiatives practised in the L.A. department of social services. I recalled a conversation that he would share with me the public information about successes in social programs so I could pass it on to the Alberta Family and Social Services department. In his memory and to realize his wish, I would like to hand over this package to the hon. Minister of Alberta Family and Social Services.

Once again I thank you for your brotherhood in the Legislature, filling in for the brotherhood I have lost.

head: Orders of the Day

3:00

head: Public Bills and Orders Other than

head: Government Bills and Orders

head: Second Reading

**Bill 205  
School (Early Childhood Services)  
Amendment Act, 1999**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise this afternoon to begin second reading of Bill 205, School (Early Childhood Services) Amendment Act, 1999, and to explain to the members of this Assembly my reasons for bringing this bill forward.

Mr. Speaker, I consider this bill to be very important to ensure that our children are provided with the solid foundation necessary for every child to learn, to grow, and to succeed to their fullest potential. The aim of Bill 205 is to establish a basic kindergarten program which is available in all school jurisdictions across this province to children who are eligible and wish to enroll. As it stands today, without Bill 205 there is a possibility – and I stress “possibility” – that a jurisdiction may not offer a kindergarten program even though it may be desired by the community. Bill 205 puts in place legislation that would give communities like these the assurance that a kindergarten program would be established if warranted. This legislation would also help to emphasize the importance of early childhood education to families in Alberta by increasing the awareness of the availability of the kindergarten program.

Mr. Speaker, I firmly believe that the objectives of Bill 205 are consistent with the overall mission of the Department of Education, which is to work in partnership with Albertans

to ensure that all . . . students have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to be self-reliant, responsible, caring and contributing members of society.

By increasing awareness and availability of the kindergarten program, children across the province would have equal opportunity to benefit from this first important step into the education system and to build a strong foundation for their future development.

Mr. Speaker, we want our children to be the best educated in the

country. We want our children to be able to achieve their fullest potential to create a positive future for themselves, their families, and their communities. We want our children to contribute to a strong and prosperous society where all Albertans can participate and enjoy the benefits of our province. This is the Alberta advantage, and education is one of the driving forces behind it.

Albertans recognize that when we talk about education, we are talking about our future. Our province is committed to providing the best education for all Alberta students, and perhaps no period is so formative and influential in shaping a child’s sense of one’s self as is the age at which one begins kindergarten.

Mr. Speaker, improving access and awareness of education at the kindergarten level does support this government’s current initiatives. In fact, it is consistent with steps that this government has already taken with a plan entitled First Things First: Our Children, a 12-point action plan for education introduced at the beginning of this year. It is also in keeping with recommendations made during the 1997 Alberta Growth Summit.

An early introduction to learning is the key to the future success of our children. Our government has recognized the importance of acknowledging education from diapers to 12. Following in suit of such recent initiatives introduced by Alberta Education, Bill 205 can be added to our list of accomplishments while providing our province with a strong foundation for the future intellectual, physical, and social development of our children.

Mr. Speaker, the importance of our children and early childhood education was also discussed in the recent Speech from the Throne. The speech emphasized that children are the future of this province and a key priority for our government. It addressed a commitment to greater emphasis on early intervention and a continued commitment on the part of this government to ensure that our young people receive quality education.

Certainly it’s not only this government which recognizes the need for a greater emphasis on education during a child’s formative years. Parent, teachers, and communities across this province also acknowledge the importance of education at the kindergarten level. Mr. Speaker, school boards and school councils strongly support this proposed legislation, as do many of my constituents, who expressed concerns, opinions, and provided suggestions through phone calls, letters, and public meetings.

Mr. Speaker, I would stress that in recent years a concrete program for kindergarten has been developed, and now the time is right to legislate the current kindergarten program. In 1997 a new parent handbook for kindergarten was developed to help parents become even stronger partners in their child’s education. Development of a provincial kindergarten curriculum and the definition of a kindergarten statement have provided stability and a foundation for a program that has not always been concrete.

So as you can see, Mr. Speaker, this proposed legislation is consistent with the current kindergarten programming provided by the province, and it is my belief that Bill 205 can be used to strengthen the system and continue the progress we are making in this area. The debate surrounding the structure of kindergarten has been ongoing for many years both in academic research and in this Assembly. Now, with our current government agenda of striking the right balance and a provincial program for kindergarten clearly defined, this legislation is timely.

We have made changes, and we are now ready to make a commitment to 400 hours of kindergarten programming. We must consider this legislation as a progressive step towards an ongoing commitment to maintain Alberta’s excellent reputation for quality education. Bill 205 and kindergarten are not in opposition of one another, Mr. Speaker. They link together an idea and an existing program

that strengthens the foundation of our education system and is of benefit to all Albertans.

The plan I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, entitled *First Things First: Our Children*, a 12-point action plan for education, is a reinvestment plan for education, with new early intervention programs such as focusing on early literacy, improved classroom support, providing more teachers' aides in the classroom, expanding English as a Second Language funding to children born in Canada, expanding supports for children with special needs, and issues concerning increasing enrollment. The plan clearly places an emphasis on young children.

There is no question that children entering kindergarten have different backgrounds and experiences and are at different ages of development. What we must do is make sure that children are prepared for the expectations of grade 1 education and that the kindergarten curriculum prepares children for the next step. Mr. Speaker, what *First Things First* also accomplishes is easing classroom pressure and improving student achievement. It enables school authorities to hire more teachers, teaching assistants, teacher interns, or other professionals as needed to assess students' literacy skills and assist those at risk of falling behind.

Mr. Speaker, the focus is to reach children at an early age to ensure their success in later years. The proposed legislation before us today is consistent with this initiative, as it provides a concrete program of education at the kindergarten level to all children throughout the province. What this means is that all children, regardless of where they live in Alberta, will have the same opportunity to receive a positive beginning to their education. The main intention of this bill is to reinforce our commitment to quality education by investing in the early years of education. Bill 205 assures Albertans that this government is listening and responding to their vision of the future, a vision which ensures that all young children are given a successful start in school.

As I mentioned previously, this follows the advice given by Albertans during the 1997 Growth Summit, which identified people development as the number one priority facing our province. In fact, one recommendation of the 1997 Growth Summit was to make kindergarten available in all school districts by the year 2000. While Alberta Education has developed initiatives to improve education in the early years and established a program statement for kindergarten, Bill 205 goes one step further by legislating the kindergarten program.

The kindergarten program has evolved over the years, with the release of the kindergarten program statement in 1995 as a curriculum guide for kindergarten. This statement describes the learning achievements that will prepare children for grade 1 and is the foundation for all programs funded by the province.

Mr. Speaker, the goal of the kindergarten program is to help children prepare for formal education and ease the transition from home to school. Kindergarten is and will remain a voluntary program in Alberta. However, I hope that this legislation will emphasize to parents the importance and benefit of kindergarten in the early formative years and will serve as some encouragement to enroll their children in a program.

Currently kindergarten is available in all school jurisdictions throughout the province, with 97 percent of Alberta children taking advantage of the program. Kindergarten programs are provided through the public school system, private schools, or private, nonprofit programs. They must meet government regulations and operate with certified teachers. A program is currently defined as 400 hours of kindergarten, at least 18 in-home visits to each child in an in-home program during the school year, or an equivalent in a combination of hours and visits. Additionally, the provincial

kindergarten program statement outlines what children should learn and be able to achieve in kindergarten.

3:10

Mr. Speaker, I understand the concerns of some members in this House today. They may feel that this legislation would be a kind of one-size-fits-all solution and would not be consistent with the individualized approach of school jurisdictions throughout this province. This is simply not so. In fact, this legislation would not alter the authority of school jurisdictions in providing kindergarten programs because kindergarten is already offered in all school jurisdictions in the province.

A part of the beauty of our province of Alberta is its diverse and dynamic nature, with every school and community having specific needs and unique considerations. Decisions made at the local level ensure that the schools and communities are directly involved in the planning process and able to respond to the specific needs of students and the community.

At present kindergarten classes vary between regions, from school to school in the same region, and between different classes in the same school. This legislation I'm proposing would continue to allow for flexibility within the program while providing all Alberta children with the opportunity to benefit from standardized provincial kindergarten. Standardizing programming of any kind is beneficial for mobility, transferability, and to establish quality education that is accessible to all children in all jurisdictions throughout Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, children's early learning experiences are too important to be dealt with haphazardly. Education is a significant contributor to our communities, and we are committed to providing an education system that meets Alberta's expectations for the next generation as well as our students' learning needs. It has been the goal of this government to find the most efficient and cost-effective ways of getting things done while at the same time respecting the rights of communities to manage their own needs and set their own priorities. We have worked hard to establish this balance in our education system by targeting specific areas of need in education, and I do believe this province is providing a quality and appropriately funded education system for the students across Alberta.

Ensuring that parents and students have a variety of choices within the public education system was highlighted in this year's annual report of the Department of Education. I want to stress, Mr. Speaker, that this proposed legislation is consistent with this goal and is simply confirming that all families have access to a kindergarten program regardless of where they live in the province.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, thanks to efforts and initiatives in the last fiscal year, education in Alberta has moved out of restructuring into a time of stability and can look to the future with renewed confidence. Bill 205 fits in with this government's plan to work towards a stable foundation for future progress by updating the definition of basic education, inclusive of kindergarten.

Again, this proposed legislation is not only timely but appropriate. I would state once more that we have established a structured program for kindergarten, and Bill 205 makes that program stronger without removing flexibility and programming.

As a province we have made efforts and taken the initiatives to create and maintain the Alberta advantage. Education is a key element of that advantage; in fact, it is integral to the future of this province. Bill 205 is part of making our education system better. I believe that with co-operation and communication in all areas, we will certainly strike the right balance between fiscal and quality-of-life issues.

Bill 205 is fundamental to the educational balance of Alberta as the foundation which would solidify the access of our children to an

early start in their education. I urge all my colleagues to support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have an opportunity to rise and support Bill 205, which would essentially include kindergarten in the School Act as part of the regular grades 1 to 12 system.

Even though the member in presenting the bill made reference to the government and what this would do for the government, I think it's unfortunate that it isn't a government bill, that it is a private member's bill. Nevertheless, given that it is a private member's bill, I'm still more than delighted to support it and can only hope that should this bill pass – and it'll certainly have the support of our caucus – it will very shortly become a government bill and kindergarten will become a legitimate part of the School Act. So I hope that if this passes, the government will adopt the measure and right what has been I think a dark period of history in terms of early childhood services in this province, starting in 1993.

The inclusion of kindergarten in the School Act reminds us of the history of legislating public schools and public school programs. It goes back a long way, to Germany in fact. Germany led in terms of preparing legislation for the inclusion of children in the first public schools that were opened to all. They included children in legislated schooling for children in those days to whatever grade was required to allow those youngsters, those students, to hold office in church or state. That was the criteria, that they had to provide enough public education open to all that would allow the graduates to hold an office in church or state.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

These early systems were voluntary, much as kindergarten is in this bill. The requirement in the bill is that a school district provide a program. It really wasn't until 1619 that compulsory schooling was introduced. That compulsory schooling, interestingly enough, didn't include girls; it was designed just for males. Germany was about a century ahead of other European countries in terms of making sure children attended classrooms and gained the kind of education that the community thought was important. It's out of that history of compulsory schooling in Germany that many of our laws are rooted and drawn for even some of the language.

I think the inclusion of kindergarten in the School Act is a good idea for many, many reasons. Given our experience in this House, I think it would in part insulate kindergartens from the attacks that they suffered in the post-1993 era at the hands of this government. For that reason alone I would support putting it in the School Act. More importantly, though, the politics aside, I think that including it in the School Act legitimizes early childhood education, legitimizes kindergarten as an integral part of a child's education. It's not an add-on, it's not a privilege, it's not a bonus, but it's an integral part of a youngster's schooling. I think it would also insulate us from the silly games that went on in this House, where we had the spectre of a Minister of Education standing up and indicating that there was no research to support the inclusion of kindergarten in a school program.

That whole business of legitimizing kindergarten is, I think, an important piece of this bill should it ever become government policy and part of government legislation, something more than a private member's bill. It's that recognition of the importance of a child's emotional and intellectual and social development that is important when we consider supporting the member's bill.

3:20

There are a number of questions that it raises. It raises, for me at least, the whole question of why we look at early childhood education in this House in the way that we do. It's in such stark contrast to other jurisdictions on this continent. You look at Ontario. The move there is not an attempt to try to shoehorn kindergarten into the legitimate programs of the province; they're actually looking at the inclusion of junior and pre-junior kindergarten. We really do so little for early childhood education compared to states like Michigan, Delaware, Rhode Island. Rhode Island has just made a move to introduce all-day kindergartens for every youngster in that state. Ohio: out to get 20,000 volunteers to help children, operating in the early childhood programs. Michigan: they have summer programs for young children, particularly for young children at risk. There just is so much more being done than what we seem to do, and even what we do, we seem to do grudgingly and do in the way that this is being handled.

So I think it's a question that all of us should ask: really, what value do we put on early childhood education? Where do we get our notions of the value of kindergarten and similar programs? I'm happy to support it in terms that it's what Alberta Liberals have sought going back to 1973, when the government first funded kindergarten.

I think there are some parts of the bill we would like to see changed. Certainly the 400 hours is not a full half-day of kindergarten, as we had pre-1993 and as a number of boards are still managing to maintain by diverting other funds. I think it's unfortunate that it names 400 and not 475 hours or the full half-day. My temptation, of course, was to bring forward an amendment, but I didn't want to derail the bill and not allow other members to have an opportunity to speak in support of the bill.

The other troubling part of it is that it would still include fees for kindergarten. I lament at the drift away from our basic notions of a tax-supported public education system, and that drift would be supported if this were to become part of the School Act, where fees and fees for kindergarten have become the norm, have been accepted. It think it's a drift that was done and accepted without a lot of thought. It just seemed easier, I suspect, on the part of most parents to pay those fees rather than to question them. I think we were wrong – and I include myself in that, when my daughter was in kindergarten – not to have questioned the paying of the fees that we did at that time. So I think those two things – the time devoted to the program, the 400 hours, and that these children and their parents would still be subjected to fees – are areas that in the future we should come back to and do the right thing to make the kinds of changes that should be made.

I think we could spend some time maybe usefully looking at what we did to kindergarten that has led to the day that we have this bill in front of us. The member opposite, in introducing the bill, talked about the growth summit and the recommendations coming out of the growth summit and that this bill is consistent with those recommendations. I agree. I still wonder and find it astounding that out of the roundtables that were held in 1993, having attended some of them, one of the actions that came out of those roundtables was the cutting of kindergarten. I still do not quite understand how that all came about. I'm glad to see that the member has referenced the growth summit. I think the work that was done at the growth summit and the recommendations that were made are important. We shouldn't forget the kinds of things that were said there.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Some of the other things that have happened. The cut from 400

to 200 hours seemed so arbitrary. The half day seems to make sense, and certainly it makes sense in terms of continuity of instruction and experiences for young children. It makes sense in terms of a lot of the parenting that goes on. I never did understand why we've chosen 200 hours or even tried to justify 200 hours in the past as being the appropriate number of hours for children. Again, I think we have to come back to this whole business of hours and straighten it out eventually and make sure that we have at least a minimum half-day kindergarten available for children.

Some members of the House who voted against our bill – and I believe it was 1995 – that would have reintroduced kindergartens must look at this bill with some curiosity and maybe even, I hope, some misgivings that they didn't support a previous bill from our side of the House which was much similar to this, although it did have different hours of instruction. There were 36 members who spoke against reintroducing kindergarten as contained in the bill that we introduced in 1995. It makes you wonder what they must think, seeing this private member's bill from one of their own members now before us in the House. It would be interesting to hear their remarks as they stand to support, hopefully, this private member's bill.

I think the bill is a step in the right direction. It gives us an opportunity to revisit the whole notion of early childhood education, to maybe straighten out our thinking, and to do the right thing in terms of young children.

So with those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I'd conclude and await other members' comments. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 205, the School (Early Childhood Services) Amendment Act, 1999. I support the initiative that my colleague from Calgary-East has taken with the introduction of this bill. I understand his intent and his desire to continue to build Alberta's education system to be the best that it can be for our province's children.

The bill we're debating today pertains to early childhood services. These services are a wonderful part of a student's journey through our formal educational system.

THE SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but the time limit for consideration of this particular matter today has now expired.

head: Motions Other than Government Motions

3:30

### Fiscal Stabilization Fund

507. Mrs. MacBeth moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to establish a fiscal stabilization fund to be used strategically to smooth over the instability of Alberta's revenue base and to ensure that health care, education, and social service programs are protected from the threat of further expenditure reductions.

[Debate adjourned March 30: Mr. Sapers speaking]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

MR. SAPERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been awhile since we've had an opportunity to discuss Motion 507, which is a motion put forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition, my colleague from Edmonton-McClung. It calls for the creation of a stability

fund, and we've gone to some lengths to explain why this stability fund is necessary and why it is different from what the government has done with the budget, and that is to create this so-called economic cushion.

Mr. Speaker, in a review of *Hansard* I noticed that some comments coming from government members speaking against Motion 507 – I must say I was quite surprised to hear government members speaking against the notion of the creation of a stability fund. In any case, one of the things that was mentioned was the need for consolidation and how a stabilization fund would be contrary to the government's move towards consolidated budgeting, and also that it would run afoul of accounting practices, as the government has moved towards more transparency in their financial disclosure. I want to take the opportunity right now to put on the record why I think those arguments are really not good arguments against Motion 507. Perhaps after hearing this part of the discussion, the notion of a stability fund may gain more favour with members of the government.

Now, the fiscal stabilization fund that we're proposing is considered to be a designated asset that can only be used for the legislated purpose of protecting against revenue volatility and preventing budget shortfalls. Designated assets are assets that have been formally set aside or designated by the government to indicate the government's intention to use those assets, in this case the stability fund, for a specific purpose.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

For the information of the Treasurer and other government members, a public-sector accounting statement issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants – I believe it's public statement 3100 issued in June of 1997 – recommends how to account for and report on restricted assets in the financial statements of government. These restricted assets for the sake of this discussion can be considered the same thing as a designated asset or a designated fund. Assets subject to certain restrictions, such as the fiscal stabilization fund, would not be available to meet the government's general obligations or to finance its other activities. Designated assets, such as our fiscal stabilization fund, would be disclosed in the notes to the financial statements to ensure accountability and transparency to Albertans. The disclosure would include a description of the assets as well as their intended use.

Madam Speaker, it is interesting to hear the Treasurer and his cohorts talk about their commitment to full consolidation within the government's financial reporting entity. This is the same government that's failed to comply with the annual recommendations of the Auditor General to include regional health authorities, postsecondary education institutions such as universities and colleges, and school boards within the government's reporting entity. These provincial government organizations are responsible for over \$6.4 billion worth of expenditure, or nearly 42 percent of the total program expenses of the province of Alberta, yet they are still not included in the province's consolidated reporting entity. A little bit of consistency is called for here I believe.

If the government members are concerned about consolidation, then perhaps they would heed the Auditor General's advice and move towards real consolidated reporting. This is what the Auditor General had to say in his 1997-98 annual report on page 215.

My view is that there is a need to include in the Province's consolidated reporting entity several entities which are presently excluded, such as, Provincially owned universities, colleges, technical institutes, regional health authorities [and school boards] . . . It is not the purpose of my recommendation to seek to introduce control

that is not already present nor to have those entities behave differently. Rather, my goal is to have accounting applied as a tool to measure the totality of what is occurring. As a result, full accounting will assist each relevant ministry to manage the resources of each sector to its best advantage, without unnecessary interference in the operating decisions of the entities.

Now, on March 14, 1995, the former Provincial Treasurer said that this government was committed to finishing the job, i.e. full consolidation, so that Albertans receive a comprehensive picture of the government's revenue and expenditure plans.

I would digress for just a moment to reflect on that. Of course when Mr. Dinning said that as the former Treasurer leading towards full consolidation, he wasn't yet or probably wasn't even anticipating being named the chair of the Calgary regional health authority. I wonder, Madam Speaker, whether or not he will be moving towards full consolidation of the nearly billion dollar budget that the Calgary regional health authority has, moving that towards consolidated reporting within the province's reporting entity. I'd be curious to follow that through. In any case, I would like to know when the current Treasurer is going to finish the job of full consolidation that was started by his predecessor.

The government members, in speaking about this motion, have indicated that the Liberal proposal for a fiscal stabilization fund indicates that Alberta Liberals favoured deficit financing. Now, the fiscal stabilization fund would be an off balance sheet fund so that it could be drawn upon in the event of a revenue shortfall. [interjections]

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Continue, hon. member.

MR. SAPERS: I'm trying. I was hoping that something useful might be coming across, Madam Speaker, but nah.

Now, in this manner the use of the assets to fund or to smooth over revenue shortfall would not be viewed as an expenditure and therefore would not result in a net deficit under consolidation. Now, this is not a difficult concept. In fact, when the Treasurer speaks of his own economic cushion, he speaks in similar terms. It is clear that there is no call for deficit financing coming from this side of the House.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As the hon. member before me pointed out, this is private member's Motion 507, which was proposed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung. While it is a private member's motion, the comments on March 30, in particular, by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung and even today by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora make very specific and repeated reference to the motion reflecting, if you like, the principles or policies of the Liberal opposition, and I would suggest we take a little closer look at that.

In her comments the opposition leader refers to the "anticipated adoption by the government of the recommendations of the Public Sector Accounting Board on the reporting of designated assets." Translation: the stabilization fund would consist of designated assets. Certainly that was confirmed just a few minutes ago by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

The opposition leader then went on to say the other day:

While the Auditor General has indicated that his preference is for consolidated revenue statements as opposed to stabilization funds, we would argue that in fact a stabilization fund . . . could meet the Auditor's generally accepted accounting principles.

Well, Madam Speaker, that raises the fundamental question: which is it? Do they support consolidated financial reporting, including consolidated balance sheets, or don't they? I just heard the Member for Edmonton-Glenora say no, that this would be an off balance sheet asset. Well, you can't have consolidated financial statements, in particular consolidated balance sheets, by having it off balance sheet. It just doesn't work that way. Have they tabled their plan with the Auditor General in order to solicit his opinion? I'd be interested in knowing that. Have they sought the opinion of a bond rating agency as to the impact of designated assets on Alberta's rating in terms that today we have the best in Canada? Does their plan have the support of the financial community? I guess most importantly: do Albertans support the pragmatic, proven, and effective fiscal policies of this government as compared to the tax-and-spend policy of the Liberal opposition?

3:40

Now, the opposition leader then went on to talk about the July 29, 1996, report of the Revenue Forecasting Review Committee, and she read into *Hansard* one particular observation by the review panel. What she failed to do was to make mention of the concluding observation and recommendation of the panel, which states:

Given the Alberta government's policy objectives with respect to debt repayment and recognizing the variability evident in its key revenue sources, the panel believes it is reasonable to continue to apply a cushions concept in the government's annual budget making process. This approach will continue to support a policy of maintaining expenditures based on sustainable revenues, using realistic and conservative assumptions.

Madam Speaker, as the hon. member approached her closing remarks, she made the statement: "The government's fiscal plan ignores the high volatility of the Alberta economy." Exactly one day later, one day, 24 hours, an article in the *National Post* referred to the findings of a recent study by professor Ted Chambers, a business economist at the University of Alberta. If I may, Madam Speaker, I'd like to just read some of the quotes that came out of this article in the *National Post*.

The province of Alberta has outgrown its reputation as a volatile, boom-bust economy whose fortunes follow the roller-coaster rides of wheat and oil prices, a new study shows.

The employment rate in Alberta has moved from the most volatile to the most stable of Canada's three western-most resource-dependent provinces, according to Ted Chambers, a business economist at the University of Alberta.

Prof. Chambers found that over the past 10 years, employment rates in B.C. and Saskatchewan were as erratic as they were in the period from 1976-1988, while the Alberta rate stabilized substantially over that period. In fact, Alberta's employment rate was 40% more stable in the years following 1988 than in the 12 years before.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, but under Standing Order 8(4) I must put all questions to conclude debate on this motion by the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung under consideration today.

All those in favour of the motion, please say aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The motion is defeated.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:43 p.m.]



[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

For the motion:

Blakeman	Leibovici	Olsen
Carlson	MacBeth	Sapers
Dickson	Nicol	Sloan
Gibbons		

Against the motion:

Boutilier	Fritz	O'Neill
Broda	Haley	Paszkowski
Calahasen	Hancock	Pham
Cao	Herard	Renner
Cardinal	Hierath	Severtson
Clegg	Jacques	Shariff
Coutts	Johnson	Stelmach
Doerksen	Klapstein	Strang
Ducharme	Kryczka	Tannas
Dunford	Langevin	Taylor
Evans	Lougheed	Thurber
Forsyth	Marz	Trynchy
Friedel	McClellan	Yankowsky

Totals: For – 10 Against – 39

[Motion lost]

**Police Staffing Level**

508. Ms Olsen moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to establish a benchmark of one police officer for every 525 Albertans.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Norwood.

MS OLSEN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The issue of police funding is very topical today and has been for a number of years. We have to think about what exactly it is our police officers are doing and what is creating this need for more policemen. We can say and I absolutely recognize that we cannot have a policeman standing on every corner in every city and town in this province. However, we also just can't believe that community policing alone will fill the void. We have to recognize that one of the fundamental jobs of a police officer is to respond to crime. Each and every person in this Assembly and out in the rest of this province believes that when they need access to a police officer, most times when they call, they need it now, and that's not happening in this province.

What I'd like to do is just give a little background on why I feel it's very necessary to move to a benchmarking process for policing in Alberta. In 1998 there was an average of one officer for every 552 Canadians. In Alberta there was an officer for approximately every 574 citizens. This motion, Madam Speaker, will take us to the average level of policing in other prairie provinces. For example, Manitoba has an officer for every 512 residents, while Saskatchewan has an officer for every 540 residents. Alberta's per capita expenditures on policing are well below those in Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Quite frankly, our police forces deserve more in support of this issue.

The Fraser Institute has concluded in *The Costs of Crime: Who Pays and How Much?* 1998 Update – believe me; I never thought I

would be referring to a Fraser Institute document in my debate, but I am. You know what? I found them very helpful. What they've said is that each additional police officer has a positive economic impact. The institute concludes from American data that additional officers lead to a reduction of eight to 10 events per year. Those events are described by the Fraser Institute as the most serious crimes: murder, sexual assault, assault, robbery, burglary, theft, and auto theft. Let's not forget that any new vehicle now is running in the area of \$25,000 on average, so it becomes a very serious concern in relation to the types of offences being committed in this country and in this province.

The Fraser Institute calculates that each officer saves society approximately \$280,000, and that's Canadian dollars. The study on which the Fraser Institute relies was published in the prestigious journal *American Economic Review*. Madam Speaker, what I'd like to say is that the potential cost savings to Calgary alone by adopting this ratio would be approximately \$113 million. That's the cost saving to society by deterrence, by adopting this ratio. We need to consider this cost of crime on society: the cost to the victims, the cost of shattered lives, policing and private security, court and legal costs, corrections costs. They're all considered, and the Fraser Institute concludes that these total costs may be as great as the total public expenditures on public schools. So I think that's significant.

4:00

The other thing that I have to comment on is when we look at the private security industry. It's far outpacing the number of police officers being put on the streets in this country and in this province. I think that's telling us a story, and I think it's a story we need to really seriously have a look at.

In a recent Environics poll done for Alberta Justice, 51 percent of respondents stated that crime in their community was a very serious or somewhat serious problem. The people of this province stated overwhelmingly, 80 percent, that providing more police officers would be effective in reducing the level of crime. Yet when questioned about our policing levels in this province, the Attorney General, the Minister of Justice, in the recent budget estimates stated, "I think you're assuming that you need to spend more money to maintain the effectiveness of a program, and I disagree." Well, as I said before, I recognize that you can't have a police officer on every street corner. However, Madam Speaker, we need to establish a benchmark so that we can in fact address not only many of the criminal issues but the perceptions and the fear of crime that have never been dealt with.

Resources are finite. Effectiveness flows from resources. Reduced resources means reduced effectiveness. It is as simple as that, Madam Speaker. The managers of the RCMP and the municipal police departments are not alchemists; they cannot make gold out of lead.

I'd also like to note that in the introduction of Bill 24, one of the issues is impaired driving. Well, I can tell you through experience that if I'm responding to calls and I'm doing community work and I'm going to court and I'm doing all of those things on any given day, I don't have time to focus on impaired drivers. So that plays a big part in a lot of the initiatives that this government undertakes, that police agencies undertake. They can't keep up with the demand, and the demands are from the public and from groups such as MADD, PAID and from victims. The demands are very high on a police officer, and I think we need to address that through real benchmarks.

Some processes can be re-engineered to eliminate activities that do not provide value. This is particularly difficult for a field like policing, where few activities do not reap rewards. A police car on

the street is in fact a deterrent. In an urban area the capacity to have a police car at the scene of a crime in one minute or sooner is value added. I would suggest that we're probably looking at four minutes as an average, and that's actually not bad. It's getting there. When people call 911, they want to see the police officer.

In referring to the arrival of police officers in less than a minute, it's particularly the case for calls which are identified by the complainant as extremely urgent: 911 calls, those high-priority calls. In Edmonton in 1998 it took 13 minutes to respond to these calls, Madam Speaker. If the caller identified the need as urgent, the response time was 52 minutes. If it wasn't an emergency, in many instances it sat for a couple of hours on the call list. We need more officers to reduce these times. Reduction in response time is value added.

Policing is about people and responding to their needs and fears. It is not a business. It is about making society safer for businesses to operate and for people to go about their business. The price and benefit of being able to walk down the street in safety are incalculable. The price to seniors of cracking down on fraud can be their life savings. It is not a business school case, but not so in the view of our Attorney General, because he states: "I am committed to make representation for more funding only when we can demonstrate a need and a clear business case for reinvestment." That's the Attorney General from March 22, 1999. This is not a business that is going to reap the government any big return. There are not going to be dollars coming in other than fines and maybe some victim surcharges. There's nothing to sell. It's a matter of creating the sense of safety and security in the province.

The problem with crime is that it creeps up slowly. The idea is not to let it take hold and then apply more police as a deterrent. That happened – and we saw that – as a result of the issues around organized crime and the motorcycle gangs that have now taken hold. They do their business here quite happily. So I think that's an example that we should be aware of. The idea should be to keep the police level sufficiently high that crime never takes hold or never gets out of control. By reducing police funding over the past five years, that's exactly what this government has done.

Finally, another quote from the Attorney General. He claims that policing ratios are not used to determine funding levels. He states:

The \$103.1 million. Quite frankly, I don't know that the department is involved in any ratio that's done with respect to policing. We have the general agreement with the RCMP on a provincial level – what is that? – about \$81 million, and we don't become in any way involved with the RCMP in the allocation of their manpower. That's an operational decision which they make. I believe another amount of money is for the aboriginal policing, which would be included in there. I don't have that figure off the top of my head, but to assure you, when we're funding policing services, we aren't doing it on the basis of a ratio. Now, perhaps the Calgary or Edmonton city police or whatever may well try to do it on the basis of a ratio based on their own budget, but we don't do that provincially.

We know that the minister admits that police forces in cities may use these ratios. Well, the truth is that a lot of people use them, not just the Department of Justice or policing agencies. Those people include those who are considering investing in Alberta. They use them because the number of police officers has a deterrent effect. When it comes to being tough on crime, you have to walk the walk, Madam Speaker, not just talk the talk. It's time this province put up the resources on the front line so that people feel safe in their neighbourhoods and other people's neighbourhoods, not just in their homes. You know what? Quality of life in Alberta is not just the sanctity of one's home. It's how they feel outside and in the environment around the rest of the province.

I would like to just note that I think business is investing here. We've had some problems in relation to ecoterrorism, as it was defined, where we saw the collaboration between an oil and gas company and the RCMP. Without that company providing the resource for that undercover operation, it wouldn't have happened. I don't agree with that. Public money, public policing. However, I understand why it was done. So I think those are things that also need to be addressed.

In the early 1990s the government made grants for policing to municipalities under the RCMP contract. When adjusted for population and inflation, the projected RCMP provincial funding is only 84 percent of what it was in '92 and '93. Municipal policing grants have been cut much deeper. In 1992 and '93 unconditional municipal grants totaled \$210 million, of which \$33 million was for municipal policing assistance. If the municipal policing assistance grant had grown with population and inflation, it would be roughly \$37 million today. Instead, the total unconditional municipal grants are \$36 million. Calgary now has the dubious distinction, Madam Speaker, of having the ninth worst police/citizen ratio in Canada.

#### 4:10

The effect of this is to download funding responsibilities on to municipal governments. In the present budget year the Calgary Police Service requested \$4 million, later reduced to \$2.9 million because of higher fine revenue in November and December '98. On March 8 the Calgary city council discussed this request for three hours and then put off its decision until April 26, when funding issues would be clearer. The 65 new officers that this money will bring to the Calgary force will go to the front lines. Well, Madam Speaker, we know that along with the population increase comes more crime: prostitution, drugs, theft, violence, family abuse, those kinds of things. Spousal abuse is a big issue in communities. We're still waiting to see the legislation to deal with that.

In Calgary per capita police costs are 26 percent under the national average. Resources are stretched to the limit. The resources available do not reflect the change in Calgary's role as a transportation centre, where drug trafficking can flourish, and as a financial centre, where fraud and stock manipulation can flourish. The latter should be one of the government's principal concerns. We all know what happened to the Vancouver Stock Exchange in the years after it was exposed in a prominent American magazine, *Forbes*. In May '98 *Forbes* described the Vancouver Stock Exchange as the scam capital of the world. We cannot afford to have lax enforcement of our capital market in Calgary. We need highly skilled officers to protect the public. We don't need any more Bre-X fiascos.

In 1995 Calgary added half the police officers it needed to keep up with police/population levels. We see the effects. If you go downtown, you see it there. We see graffiti, or tagging, as they call it; panhandling; the rise of crack cocaine; the rise and increase in the number of individuals involved in organized crime. Those are all outcomes, Madam Speaker. Officers need more time to be proactive in helping reduce crime. Community policing cannot work when the force is only reacting to complaints. That is something that is very, very essential.

There's responding to calls, and I might add that in Calgary alone there was a 44 percent increase in the number of 911 calls for that city last year. Forty-four percent. Those are emergency calls. I can tell you that if you're a police officer working out on the street and you're short staffed, somebody's going to have to wait. I can also tell you that some of those people that have had to wait – and here in Edmonton – have been victims of robberies, have been victims of domestic disputes, have been stabbing victims. They run the gamut. When they call 911, generally an emergency call requires an

emergency response. In fact, most of those require at least a two-man car, because officer safety is essential. So that's also to be considered.

Consider that if in Calgary you look at 40 percent of an officer's time being spent responding to calls and filling in complaints, then 60 percent of the time is the only amount of time that they might be out on the street and might be visible and might be seen. But they're not visible if they're constantly responding to calls. Community policing can only be effective, Madam Speaker, if the funding levels are consistent. That means there's not only an opportunity to be out in the community, to be partners in the community – because I think that's important in preventing crime. It's important as an early intervention tool.

It's also important that we respond. The responding to crime and responding to calls is not going to go away with the community policing philosophy. It's not going to disappear. Somebody is still going to break into your home at some point. Somebody still may steal your car. Policemen are still going to be required to go to different disputes. So as good as community policing is – and I think it's the direction that needs to happen and the direction that needs to occur. In fact, in a document that the federal government put out, *A Vision of the Future of Policing in Canada*, called *Police Challenge 2000*, they recognized that community policing was the direction that they were going to go. But they also recognized they were not going to have the funding to allow a lot of the activities that police generally do to continue.

Somewhere there's got to be a balance between the two. Response to calls and the community policing philosophy belong together, not separate and distinct. But in order to have either of those, you have to have a properly and adequately funded policing agency. In the last three years police calls in Calgary are up 22 percent, dispatch calls up 24 percent, and 911 calls up 50 percent. In '98 the Calgary police force reduced the number of Check Stops. This reduces the number of charges, and that's something that speaks directly to the minister of transportation's bill. I want to know how you expect the police to do the job and look after the needs in the communities – impaired driving is one of them – when you don't have the manpower to do it.

I can tell you that we're coming up to the summertime, and hot summer nights produce some pretty interesting consequences on the street, Madam Speaker. Having been there, going call to call on some of these cases, it's interesting.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. My colleagues at some time will help pick up the debate here.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you very much. [some applause] Thank you, colleagues. Thank you.

What I'd like to begin with, Madam Speaker, is to express certainly on behalf of this government that we are extremely supportive of all levels of law enforcement agencies throughout this province. We have a good relationship with them, and we intend to maintain that relationship. In fact, I think just this weekend coming up I'll be spending an evening down in Medicine Hat with the Medicine Hat police, attending their annual dinner.

Madam Speaker, while I can appreciate the good intentions of the hon. member in suggesting that we adopt the police to population ratio as it would appear to be the only measure to determine how many policemen and policewomen we need in Alberta, the facts would tend to dictate otherwise. There are at least four other factors that need to be considered when making this determination. Firstly,

police administration has been streamlined during the past number of years by using more civilians and special constables. This change has relieved police officers of many administrative and secondary enforcement duties, and that has allowed them more time for direct police work in our communities. In fact, it's had a very positive impact on our communities. Thus, using only the police to population ratio as a gauge, as a measure, does nothing to capture this particular reality.

Secondly, municipalities with very low crime rates do not require the same density of police officers as high crime areas. I'll use, for example, St. Albert. It has a police to population ratio of one officer for every 1,267 people, compared to High Prairie, that has a ratio of one officer for every 485 people. Now, at first glance it would seem that St. Albert is underserved, until you learn that St. Albert requires its officers to deal with an average of 87 crimes per officer per year, compared to High Prairie, where the average is one and a half times greater, or 131 crimes per officer per year. That's a very important distinction to recognize, Madam Speaker.

MRS. McCLELLAN: It must be the MLAs.

MR. HAVELOCK: Good MLAs in both areas, Madam Minister.

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, different areas require different approaches to policing. The most obvious example is that rural, low-density populations require proportionately more police officers than a highly centralized urban centre, and this is simply because of the long distances and difficult travel associated with rural policing.

Finally, Madam Speaker – and I haven't heard much from the hon. member on this – you do need to consider the overall cost. I can recall that when we were looking at, for example, organized crime, the hon. member across the way has a tendency to simply pick numbers out of the air. In fact, when we were looking at organized crime, she was suggesting that we fund police agencies in the province by an additional \$10 million. Those police agencies actually came forward with a proposal and indicated: we think we can do a good job with approximately \$2.5 million per year. However, we have run the numbers on this particular proposal, and we estimate it will cost both the municipal and provincial governments an additional \$105 million per year if we use the police to population ratio as the sole indicator. For the province alone, regarding the provincial police, this would necessitate an additional \$17 million.

As an aside, Madam Speaker, we need to be mindful of local autonomy and ensure to the greatest extent possible that decisions of this nature are primarily made at the community level. Further, having regard to provincial support for policing, the sponsor has conveniently ignored the fact that most provincial fine revenues accrue to the local municipality or community, and that is while at the same time the province offsets almost all of the costs associated with processing those tickets and with the courts. So, again, that is a significant amount of money that flows to the local community to help support their policing efforts.

4:20

In addition, Madam Speaker, after having listened carefully to the sponsor of this motion, it would appear that she's had no discussion with, for example, the Edmonton city police, and we need to be mindful, again, that Edmonton city council would ultimately be responsible for the costs associated with this initiative if we were to adopt this on a provincial basis. So, clearly, I can't support the resolution as suggested by the hon. member. I have outlined some of the difficulties associated with her rather simplified approach. Again, it's well intentioned. Nevertheless, for the reasons I've outlined, I don't believe we should support it.

Again, as I indicated earlier, we have a very good relationship

with the police in this province. I would hesitate to suggest that perhaps one of the reasons that the hon. member has brought this forward is because some time ago she was a little bit critical of the job that some of the police forces were doing in this province, and perhaps she's trying to gain back some of the brownie points that she lost during that process.

MS OLSEN: A point of order, Madam Speaker.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. member on a point of order.

#### **Point of Order Imputing Motives**

MS OLSEN: Madam Speaker, thank you. Standing Orders 23(h), (i), and (j). I'll throw the book at him. At no time have I ever suggested that anybody was doing an inadequate job in terms of policing in this province. That minister knows it. That minister also knows that I will not and have not ever and will not ever criticize the job that the police members are doing in this province.

MRS. SLOAN: In an underfunded capacity.

MS OLSEN: Absolutely. In a very underfunded capacity: \$33 million has been taken out of police funding, Madam Speaker.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Hon. member, on a point of order we don't need to get into the debate on the original motion. If you do have a point of order – and I did hear that you were referring to Standing Orders 23(h), (i), and (j) – that is the area that you would refer your remarks to.

MS OLSEN: Thank you. I would like to say, Madam Speaker, that at no time did I or have I ever suggested that police agencies haven't done a good job. That is not why I brought this motion in. I brought this motion in with good intentions to try and increase the ratio so that there is some benchmark for policing. There's no conspiracy here.

Thank you.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: On the point of order, hon. minister.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. The hon. member is a little sensitive. I was simply expressing my opinion and my interpretation of some of the public comments that she made some time ago. I think she's clarified her position. That's fine. I happen to have interpreted the statements she's made previously otherwise.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Well, I think, hon. members, sometimes it all can be in the interpretation. I do believe that when someone does say that someone has said something, I guess the proof in this particular arena would be something out of *Hansard*. If someone is going to say that someone has made certain statements, I think our reference point for this Assembly would be something out of *Hansard*. So possibly we can carry on with the discussion.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you for that. I guess in the future, then, we won't hear any references from the opposition regarding articles in the *Edmonton Journal*, since that's where they seem to get most of their questions from. [interjections] It's good to see that we're getting a response. I had some fun with the Member for Calgary-*Buffalo* last evening, and I'm enjoying this very much. I'm sure he enjoyed last evening also.

In any event, I'd just like to conclude by indicating again that I

think this is well intentioned. Nevertheless because of the reasons I've outlined, I don't believe this motion should be supported by the House.

Thank you.

#### **Speaker's Ruling Tabling Documents**

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Just before I recognize you, Calgary-*Buffalo*, the hon. minister made reference to certain media publications, and we have heard the hon. Speaker make mention of that before. It isn't something that we do relish from the chair here, and he's often said that copies of those articles should be in fact tabled for the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm delighted to join debate on Motion 508. I listened to my colleague for Edmonton-*Norwood* present a cogent, persuasive argument to address the issue of underresourcing of police services. I was quite prepared to look forward with keen anticipation of the vote, and then we saw the provocation from the current Minister of Justice. I remember the ministers of Justice we've had in this province, men of breadth and stature, people who understood the importance of law enforcement, people who had a sophisticated appreciation for the diverse challenges presented by crime in our community. I positively lament the fact that our current Minister of Justice seems to bring a kind of one-dimensional analysis to the issue of public safety, and that's sad.

I'm prepared to defer anytime when it comes to the perspectives on making our communities safer, and in any competition between my colleague for Edmonton-*Norwood* and this Minister of Justice, I'll take every time the advice and good caution we get from the Member for Edmonton-*Norwood*.

MR. PASZKOWSKI: That means get the drunks off the road, Gary.

MR. DICKSON: I'm developing a whole new relationship with the minister of transportation here, Madam Speaker.

I wanted to make a bit of a disclaimer before I go further. For most of my adult life I've had a lot of concern with our preoccupation with the three Cs when it comes to public safety: cops, courts, and corrections. I'm one of those people that has thought we spend vastly too much time and energy worrying about those three items when we really know that the things that make our communities safer, the things that make our neighbours, our seniors, and our families safer really have very little to do with those three items. I don't want the comments I'm about to make to be taken out of context. I still believe that unless and until as a jurisdiction we're prepared to make an adequate – and underscore that, adequate – investment in terms of early intervention, in terms of working with young people who are the subject of abusive relationships, growing up in incestuous situations, until we start investing the kind of resources to deal with whether it's juvenile prostitution or family violence, we're never really going to put the kind of dint in crime in our communities that we want to see.

I know the Member for Calgary-*Fish Creek* would subscribe to some of these things, maybe not, but I think she understands. I heard her make some wonderful statements when we were dealing with Bill 1. Was that only a year ago, Madam Speaker? We talked about some of those things, so I know she understands what the Minister of Justice either does not or chooses to ignore.

Now, I want to make this observation, Madam Speaker, because we're talking specifically about a ratio of police officers. I'm going to put on my . . .

THE ACTING SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, but the time limit for consideration of this item of business has concluded.

Before the chair recognizes the hon. Member for Medicine Hat, I would ask for unanimous consent of the Assembly to revert to Introduction of Guests.

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: Introduction of Guests

4:30

(reversion)

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to all members for that unanimous consent. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House one of my constituents, Terry Jorden, who is here today with Lorraine Way and Marilyn Wacko. They are keen observers and participants, as well, of health delivery in this province, in this city, and I know they're here with a keen interest in Bill 22 quite specifically, that being the Health Professions Act. So I would ask them to rise and please take the warm reception of this Assembly.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Since we have unanimous consent of the House for Introduction of Guests – I had planned on having some introductions in my speech, but I'll reserve the extra time and do it now. I would like to recognize, in addition to the representatives from AARN – I don't have all of their names, but we have with us in the members' gallery this afternoon a number of the professions and representatives of the professions that have been involved over the past five years in the development of Bill 22. They've joined us this afternoon to witness the debate on Bill 22, and I would ask that they all rise and receive the recognition of all members of the House.

head: Government Bills and Orders

head: Second Reading

### **Bill 22 Health Professions Act**

MR. RENNER: Madam Speaker, I would take pleasure in rising this afternoon to move second reading of Bill 22, the Health Professions Act.

This is the second time this act has appeared before the House. It was introduced last session as Bill 45, but all members will remember the debate was adjourned to permit further consultation with professions and other stakeholder groups over the past year.

Before I review the major changes of the legislation, I want to highlight the work and dedication of a number of professionals, not only from the regulatory colleges but from the health care community and professionals within government who have put so much effort into this legislation. I already had the opportunity to recognize those who have joined us in the gallery this afternoon.

A little bit of background information on what has taken place since Bill 45 was introduced last spring. Legislative proposals have

been circulated to each of the regulated health professions on at least five occasions. Staff have met separately with representatives of each profession several times to discuss and develop provisions for the professions schedules under this act. There have also been a number of meetings where representatives of all professions came together to discuss specific provisions of the act. Other stakeholders have been involved in the development of the legislation. Draft proposals have been provided to regional health authorities and to educational institutions that prepare health professionals. There have also been several meetings with representatives of each of these agencies.

[Mr. Clegg in the chair]

The legislation really began in 1994 with the establishment of the Health Workforce Rebalancing Committee. That committee, consisting of MLAs and public members, set out five principles that have guided the development of this legislation since day one.

1. The public must be protected from incompetent or unethical health professionals.
2. The health professional regulatory system should provide flexibility in the scope and roles of professional practice so the health system operates with maximum effectiveness.
3. The health professional regulatory system should be transparent to the public. Information about its workings and purpose should be both credible and easily available to Albertans.
4. The regulatory process for health professions must be demonstrably fair in its application. The principles of natural justice must be observed throughout and decision makers should be accountable for decisions they make.
5. The health regulatory system must support the efficient and effective delivery of health services.

This act provides the regulatory framework for 28 colleges governing 31 health professions. The act consists of the common part, which applies to all health professions, and 28 different schedules, one for each of the regulatory colleges.

Health professions will continue to be self-governing. We believe that professional self-governance has served Albertans and professions well. With this act our objective is to make the system work better by enhancing the provisions, making regulated health professions accountable to the public, and by providing the professions the tools they need to ensure their members meet expectations for competent and ethical practice.

The act will increase the accountability of self-governing professions to the public by increasing the role of the public representation of governance and disciplinary activities within the professions and providing a more responsive and less costly avenue to address concerns about regulatory colleges. Public representation on governing councils, hearing tribunals, and appeal or review bodies will be increased to a minimum of 25 percent. These public members will be appointed by government and will be paid an honorarium and expenses by government.

There will also be a health professions advisory board made up of 75 percent public members and 25 percent regulated health care practitioners which will advise the minister on matters identified by the minister. This board is advisory only and will not have any direct authority over professions.

Albertans who believe a regulatory college has acted unfairly will be able to complain to the provincial Ombudsman. A complaint to the Ombudsman may only be made after all other avenues of review have been exhausted. The Ombudsman will not be able to overturn decisions of regulatory colleges, but just as with complaints with administrative decisions within government, the Ombudsman will be able to investigate complaints and provide recommendations to

the college. This role for the Ombudsman is new and does not replace provisions for appeal both within the regulatory college and to the courts, which have traditionally existed in professional legislation.

The legislation will provide greater flexibility to address cross-professional issues such as overlapping scopes of practice and interdisciplinary practice. Under this act professions will no longer have exclusive rights to provide health services. This does not mean that all regulated health professionals will be able to provide health services. Health services that pose a significant risk to the public and require a high level of professional competence to be safely performed will be restricted. These restricted activities will appear in a schedule to the Government Organization Act. These health services may only be provided by persons authorized to do so in legislation. Some examples of restricted activities include surgery, prescribing of drugs, ordering and performing X rays, spinal manipulation, and labour and delivery.

Unlike exclusive scope of practice, restricted activities involve specific health services with identifiable risks. They are identified not as services belonging to any one profession but as services that may only be provided by authorized practitioners. Regulated health professionals will be authorized to perform these restricted activities within their regulations and in accordance with standards and requirements of the profession.

Unregulated practitioners may also provide restricted activities under some circumstances; for example, if they have been specifically authorized by the minister or if they are assisting or working under appropriate supervision of a regulated professional. I will discuss this specific issue in more detail at a later point this afternoon.

In addition to removing barriers on the provision of health services, the legislation will include specific provisions to enable health practitioners to work in association with other regulated and nonregulated health service providers. One of our four main objectives when we first began looking at health profession legislation was to reduce barriers to interdisciplinary practice and improve choice and access to health practitioners for consumers, employers, and communities. These provisions for interprofessional practice will not affect the corporate structure under which professionals may offer their services.

Currently the professional acts governing physicians, chiropractors, optometrists, and dentists contain provisions which allow registered members of these professions to establish a professional corporation. The Health Professions Act will maintain these corporate structures.

The act will promote greater consistency in the titles used by regulated health professions in their regulatory colleges so that the public will be able to better identify qualified practitioners and access their regulatory bodies. Each health profession will be governed by a college rather than professional associations, societies, or committees. Only health professions regulated under this act will be able to use the term "college" in their association's name. When members of the public see the word "college" and the name of a health profession, they will know that this is a regulatory body responsible for the conduct and competence of members of that profession. Each profession will continue to have professional titles reserved in legislation.

In addition, the use of the terms "registered" or "regulated" in association with the name of a health profession will be restricted to professions regulated under this act. Thus, when the public sees registered dentist, registered nurse, registered physician, registered psychologist, or registered medical laboratory technologist, they will know that these practitioners are regulated. Other health service providers such as herbalists, massage therapists, or personal care

attendants who are not members of a regulatory college will not be able to refer to themselves as registered, nor will associations of those providers be able to use the designation "college."

#### 4:40

In addition to distinguishing between regulated and nonregulated health service providers, this legislation will ensure that practitioners who should be regulated are regulated. All health practitioners who use protected titles or perform restricted activities will have to register under this act. In addition, health practitioners who meet the requirements for registration in a health profession, are practising within the health profession, and are providing services to the public will be required to register. Services may be provided to the public directly or indirectly by teaching the profession to students and practising members or by supervising personnel who provide professional services to the public.

This mandatory registration is unique in Alberta. It means that no one may claim to have the qualifications and training of a regulated health profession without being subject to this act, regulations, and discipline of their peers. If you are a member of a profession by virtue of your training in the services you provide, you must be regulated. You cannot hold yourself out or imply that you are a member of a regulated health profession without being regulated as a member of that profession. For the professional, regulation is not voluntary. This does not mean, however, that only regulated practitioners can provide health services. Individuals, regional health authorities, and other employers will continue to use unregulated aides, personal care attendants, technicians, and alternative therapists.

In the new Health Professions Act there will be an increased emphasis upon professions maintaining and improving their competence. It will not be acceptable for professionals to meet the initial requirements for entry into the practice and continue practising without demonstrating that they are maintaining currency in the practice of their profession. Within five years each regulatory college must develop in regulation a continuing competency program for its members. Depending upon the profession, these programs will include a variety of components or approaches, such as mandatory continuing education, required practice competency assessment, recertification, and for those professions that practise independently perhaps on-site practice visits. Some professions already have programs in place to ensure their members maintain and develop their knowledge and skills. One of the requirements for renewal of registration will be satisfactory completion of the continuing competence requirements set by the college.

This legislation sets out provisions for investigating complaints about regulated health practitioners and, where appropriate, taking disciplinary action. It is essential that these processes be objective, unbiased, and open to the public. This must be balanced with the need to maintain confidentiality and administrative efficiency. Each college will be required to appoint a complaints director, who will be the public contact for complaints to a college. The complaints director may take a variety of actions, ranging from dismissal of a complaint to complaint resolution to an investigation prior to a hearing. This individual will have the authority to start an investigation without a formal complaint based on other information, such as notification from a regulatory body in another province or a report from an employer indicating that a registered practitioner was dismissed for incompetence.

An important feature of this legislation is the provision for alternate complaint resolution. Through processes such as mediation complainants and practitioners may meet confidentially in a less confrontational atmosphere to resolve differences to their mutual

satisfaction and to the satisfaction of the college. To ensure that the public's interest is served, the college must participate in the process and ratify any decision made through the complaint resolution. Individuals with complaints and the professions themselves have often found that holding a disciplinary hearing is not the most effective way to address consumer concerns.

To avoid bias and the perception of bias, the act requires that the functions of the complaint director and hearings director may not be undertaken by the same person. If discipline results in suspension or cancellation of registration, that decision must be made public. Other disciplinary decisions may be released at the discretion of the college. Once all avenues have been exhausted, including the time limits for reviews, both the complainant and the investigated person will be able to complain to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman can investigate and make recommendations. Investigated persons will still be able, as they are now, to appeal disciplinary decisions to the courts. Once a matter is appealed to the court, it cannot be referred to the Ombudsman.

I have a number of other comments that I'll be happy to clarify once this bill gets to the committee stage. The bill, by its very nature, is fairly complex and long, and I do look forward to some good discussions at the committee stage. In the time that I have remaining, I would like to address the issue of restricted activities and supervision of restricted activities.

The Alberta Association of Registered Nurses has identified what I think is a very legitimate concern with the way the bill is worded at this point in time. All along we have indicated that individuals performing restricted activities should be registered and that there should be very rare exceptions where someone who is not registered is performing restricted activities. I had indicated in discussions with the AARN that these restrictions would be dealt with under regulation. However, I have been reading with some detail the specific wording in that section in the act, and I agree that it could be ambiguous as to whether or not regulations are required. So when the House deals with this bill at committee stage, I will be introducing an amendment that will very specifically indicate that no person shall be in a position to supervise an unregulated practitioner unless they're authorized to do so under regulations developed by their college.

I think this is a reasonable way of dealing with the situation. It allows for the absolutely essential regulations to deal with the education of students, for example. No one can be expected to learn how to do a restricted activity without actually doing so. So colleges will have the opportunity to put into place regulations that will deal with how their members supervise students. There may be other circumstances where colleges identify a need to have regulations in place for their members supervising unregulated individuals. Those regulations will be determined by the college. As all members know, when any of the health professions bring forward regulations, there is a very broad-based consultation revolving around those regulations. There is consultation with other colleges as the regulations are being developed. The regulations cannot be passed until they have been approved both by the college affected and by Lieutenant Governor in Council, cabinet/government.

So I think this is a reasonable way to deal with this. I don't think it's a significant change from what we have in the act. I think it's really a clarification of what was intended in the act all along. I look forward to having a further discussion with the health professions, particularly the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses, as we develop the specific wording of this amendment. I think their concern can be addressed very adequately by introducing an amendment of this type.

In the few short seconds that I have remaining, let me once again

thank all of the health professions, particularly those that have taken the time to join us here this afternoon and watch the debate from the members' gallery. This has been something that I have thoroughly enjoyed over the past four years, working with this highly effective group of professionals. They are effective not only in their professional lives, but believe me, they're more than effective in their lobbying of politicians. I've been on that end of their professionalism as well. I have found this to be probably the biggest challenge of my short political career.

I would like to once again compliment everyone who has been involved in the development of this act, not only the professions but all of the staff that have worked so diligently in Alberta Health and Alberta Labour as we have finally reached the point where we have legislation that can now be passed and will in fact deal with our health professions at the end of the 20th century and well into the 21st century. So with that, I will take my seat and look forward to hearing other members as they comment on this legislation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

4:50

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS LEBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to address Bill 22 at second reading, the Health Professions Act, and have listened to the overview that was provided by the Member for Medicine Hat. I would also like to thank the Member for Medicine Hat for providing the Official Opposition with some background on this particular act, because it is, when you look at it, quite a book and has taken a long time to get to the point that it is, where we are discussing it in this Assembly.

I can remember in 1994 when the current Minister of Labour was involved with the Health Workforce Rebalancing Committee and as a result put out a document called New Directions for Legislation Regulating the Health Professions in Alberta. I'm sure that most of the guests in the balcony as well as those who were involved with the many discussions that were held across the province in looking at the proposals at the time from the government are to some degree pleased that the government has moved away from its agenda – hopefully I'm right in making this statement – of deprofessionalizing the professions in this province and looking at how we could have had within this province situations where individuals who are not able or skilled to perform certain duties might have had the opportunity to do so. So I would like to recognize the Member for Medicine Hat for moving the position of the government forward so there is a recognition that there are activities that are required to be restricted and that only certain professions can in fact provide those activities.

This is really important when we look at the philosophy behind Bill 22. What it has done is it has taken 30 health occupations that have had a mix of exclusive scope of practice as well as protection of title and has now amalgamated those professions under one umbrella act.

MRS. SLOAN: Into a melting pot.

MS LEBOVICI: Into a melting pot. I'm sure, as everyone is aware, that when that happens, sometimes the fit is very difficult. I have to commend as well all the professions for continuing to work with the government to co-operate and to collaborate to try and see whether or not this is in fact feasible.

Some of the feedback that I have had from some of the professions are questions as to whether in fact this can work, whether there is the ability to have overarching legislation, even though there are

these schedules that are attached to that overarching legislation, that will be able to deal with the issue of the health professions in this province and how they organize and manage themselves.

There have been references made by some of the professions, not all, to ourselves that Bill 22 is a very complicated piece of legislation, that it is not written in plain English in a fair amount of the act, and that there is an inordinate amount of cross-references which sometimes contradict each other. There are redundancies, and there are also confusing definitions. I know that the member is aware of some of that, and I would hope that when we get to the Committee of the Whole stage, we will see amendments that will try and clarify some of the concerns that have been brought forward by the different associations. As well, the Official Opposition will have amendments to put forward to try and help make the act work. There are concerns as well, especially with some of the smaller colleges, with regards to the cost to implement some of the requirements that had been outlined by the Member for Medicine Hat with regards to the committees, investigations, complaint processes, et cetera.

What is interesting – and perhaps we're seeing some of that in the concerns that are expressed specifically at this point by the Alberta Association of Registered Nurses – is that there appears to have been a fast tracking of the legislation to get it here into the Assembly. Perhaps it would have been wiser to wait until the fall session, if we have a fall session of the Legislative Assembly, to have brought this bill in to address in fullness all the concerns that are being expressed, because there has been a fair amount of give-and-take by everyone in getting to this stage.

For instance, the Psychologists Association has indicated that they would like an opportunity to sit down with the Member for Medicine Hat, the chair of the Health Professions Act implementation steering committee – I'm not quite sure what to refer to you as with regards to this bill – to discuss some concerns that they have, especially with regards to the development of the new category entitled the associate psychologist. There are also concerns that have been expressed by at least three or four of the colleges with respect to students and registration of students, and this will no longer be mandatory is my understanding. So there are some areas that are still significant areas with regards to the implementation of this act in ensuring that the public is protected that I believe need to be ironed out between where we are today and a potential third reading of this act.

In particular, the one that I believe has the greatest concern is with regards to – and the member did mention it in his speech – restricted activities and the fact that under the current wording in Bill 22 there is a potential for individuals who are not skilled to in fact be allowed or be delegated the ability to perform a restricted activity.

I look forward to the amendment that will be brought forward by the member. I also tabled in the Legislative Assembly today an amendment that we will bring forward in the Committee of the Whole stage to deal with that issue, and I don't know if the Member for Medicine Hat has had a chance to look at that amendment as yet. But what it very clearly does – it's under section 136(4)(1)(b) – is delete the ability for a person to perform a restricted activity

- (i) with the consent of, and
- (ii) under the supervision of, a person described in clause (a)(i).

I know that the member can probably quote every single clause within this particular act, so he's well aware of what that concern is.

If there is a requirement to meet the needs of the professional associations to make the wording in Bill 22 less ambiguous to ensure that in fact what we will see is a clear act that does not provide more confusion, that does not provide for the potential of, I guess, battles between the professions, now would be the time to do it. Now would be the time to ensure that what we have is an act that can

deliver on what it was set out to do. And if in fact we are not 100 percent sure that that can happen, if there is an inkling that what may well happen with the passage of Bill 22 is confusion with regards to the professions that will be affected by Bill 22, my suggestion at this point would be to ensure that that is addressed either in the Committee of the Whole stage or between now and the fall session of the Legislative Assembly.

5:00

So I pass that on to the Member for Medicine Hat as a piece of advice. The member has taken this piece of legislation to the point where it can be introduced and it can be debated within the Legislative Assembly, but if there is any potential for it to cause disruption, confusion, or anger, perhaps, between any of the professional groups, that is also part of the process of having come to the point that the member has brought this particular bill to over the last two to three years that I believe he has been involved with it.

There are some areas within the bill that we will address more specifically as we get into the Committee of the Whole stage. As I indicated, there are those areas that have confusion within the drafting of the legislation. There are questions that we would like to see addressed with regards to the appointment of the public members who make up 25 percent of the council and will be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. An issue there is with regards to ensuring that the public members are in fact not seen to be political appointments but are in fact representatives of the public.

We have an example of an appointment that was made today to the Calgary regional health authority that is a political appointment. It is a political appointment of an individual who is very tied to this current government, and the question is whether that individual has the ability to stand apart and stand for the needs of the public. This is an issue that I believe needs to be addressed with regards to the makeup of the council of each college. Hand in hand with that, however, also goes the ability for the public members to be able to speak their minds and the ability for the public members to ensure that they cannot have gag orders put on them by the council as well. So I see that as a two-way street.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

I'd like to know what the government has costed as the potential cost to establish some of the committees, the hearings that have been outlined in Bill 22. Is there an average cost for each college, perhaps, or an average cost that the government recognizes will be added to the budget of each college as a result of this legislation? Is there in fact any help coming from the government to help those colleges, especially the smaller ones that do not have the capability or the ability to provide for these services perhaps? And what are the contingency plans that the government has for ensuring that they will be able to provide those particular services?

The issue of the students and their registration with the profession. That seems to be one that has cropped up in some of the colleges that have been contacted, and I'd appreciate if the member can explain perhaps more fully what the rationale is, as well as ensure that it's very clear, because there seems to be some confusion as to what the effects of this particular section will be on students in the professions.

There's a question with regards to regulated members, that they are defined as, of course, being able to do restricted activities. Does that regulated member have to hold a current practice permit or not? The Member for Medicine Hat is nodding his head. I assume that that's an affirmative, so that answers that particular question.

Section 117 is a curious section that I would appreciate some



background on as to what the history of that is. It seems to allow for a complaints director to direct a member of a college "to submit to [a] specified physical or mental examination," and this is without a complaint being registered against that member. I'd like to know from which professional association that has come from, if that was a generic clause that was across all of the professional associations in the past, and what the rationale was for that. It seems to me that in most complaint processes there has to be a complaint that is put forward in writing or somehow to an individual who can perform the investigation. This seems to be out of the blue that the complaints director can wake up and decide that there is going to be an individual who will have to undertake physical and mental examinations, and that director can also direct that individual to submit to treatment, if I'm reading that section properly. So I would appreciate some more clarification on that.

The issue of the regulations and bylaws, sections 130 to 133, codes of ethics and standards of practice. It's my understanding these are to be approved by cabinet. I assume that the process will be – and I believe the member had alluded to that – that each college will be responsible for providing and making those regulations, bylaws, codes of ethics, and standards of practice. I understand that perhaps part of the process may be to consult with the other colleges, and then in fact it is sent to the Lieutenant Governor, who would be the final approval on those regulations. But if the member could be more specific as to how this is going to be done, if this is going to be the situation with all of those areas, then that would be appreciated as well.

The key is protection of the public with regards to the delivery of health care services. In looking at the bill and in using that as a filter, that will be the approach that will be looked at in determining whether or not a clause or whether or not this act meets those needs.

There are needs that the health professions have as well that are required to be addressed, and I will continue to bring those to the attention of the member as they are brought to myself. I would hope, continuing in the spirit of collaboration and co-operation that we've had over the last little while with regards to this act, that we would be able to address the concerns that have been brought forward by the groups to ensure that this bill does meet the mandate that has been set out by the government, to ensure that health care in this province can be delivered in the best way possible by the appropriate professionals that are trained and skilled to deliver those services.

I at this point will close my remarks with that and look forward to continued discussion. Thank you.

**THE ACTING SPEAKER:** The hon. leader of the ND opposition.

**5:10**

**MS BARRETT:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, you may think with the comments I'm about to make that I'm from Missouri, but I tell you, I always get suspicious when a government wants to go from bills – just a second; let me just show you, demonstrate this – the size of this to bills the size of a novel. All right. I get really suspicious.

**MR. PASZKOWSKI:** Oh, you'll love this, Pam.

**MS BARRETT:** I'm gonna love your bill? Okay. I'm looking forward to the transportation minister's bill just as much as I've looked forward to the introduction of Bill 22.

Now, I'll tell you that what makes me suspicious about this bill in the first place is why it's needed. Let's just go right to the point: why do we need it? We already have acts that govern all of the health professions. I'll tell you what I suspect, Madam Speaker, and

yes, you are going to think I'm from Missouri. I suspect that in the long run the government thinks it's a lot easier to push people around if they can do it under the auspices of one bill instead of having to do it under the covers of 29 separate bills, which would cause public outcry. I predict that that's the reason this bill is in front of us in the first place.

However, that said, I'm accepting it for the most part. But I'm not convinced yet that the sponsoring member has allayed the concerns of the Association of Registered Nurses when it comes to them or other registered health professionals being able to consent – and I did use the word "consent," not "delegate" – to a nonregistered person performing a restricted activity ordinarily, or maybe expressly, reserved for the profession.

I'll give you some examples here. Did you know that there are some receptionists in doctors' offices who have been known to administer vaccination injections? I understand this to be the case. Now, I can speak from personal experience on the home care issue. This is absolute personal direct experience that I've had. Home care agencies hire a full range of health care providers, and you don't know, when that person goes knock-knock on your door, if the person there is a registered nurse, an LPN, a personal care assistant, or somebody who has never taken any training whatsoever.

I do know that they feel they're put in very awkward situations. They don't know if they're really allowed to hand your mother that pill or if that would be a violation of the law. There's a lot of gray territory out there, and until that section of the act is amended specifically, I certainly would not be satisfied with this legislation.

I'm concerned that the way the sponsoring member wants to amend it is to not specifically outline just who is allowed. Yes, I trust the AARN to come up with regulations and bylaws that would be the steering device for the government, but why not spell out just who isn't allowed to do this under any circumstance? The only argument that I can see for allowing somebody other than a registered professional to perform some of these restricted activities would be a student. So spell it out.

If the government can tell me other circumstances under which they would sanction a nonregistered professional administering or conducting an activity that is otherwise restricted or exclusively restricted to the health care profession involved, I'd like to know, because I worry that what we're talking about here is the thin edge of the wedge. While the AARN may at one point develop regulations, the government says: okay; we'll sanction those with government regulations. It's up to the legislation initially to determine the interpretation of those regulations.

Furthermore, government regulations are, I realize, an impediment to democracy because they're done just by cabinet, and they get the Lieutenant Governor to sign on the dotted line. Well, you know, when it comes to public health care, I don't believe that democracy is an inconvenience. I think important changes like this should be in the legislation itself. So I'll wait and see what the amendment says, but I'm not going to hold my breath, and I can't see myself supporting it unless the AARN can convince me otherwise. Those people are very concerned, rightfully so. How would you like to be put in a position of, I guess, inherent conflict of interest? "Do I let this unregulated person, maybe untrained person do such and such, or do I not?" Then the question comes back to you, and you say: well, just a minute; if I, the nurse, am in the room anyway, why wouldn't I be doing it? You see where I'm headed? The only excuse they've got for this serious flaw in the legislation is that they wanted to exempt students. If you want to exempt students, spell it out. It's pretty simple: s-t-u-d . . .

**AN HON. MEMBER:** E-n-t-s.

MS BARRETT: . . . e-n-t-s. I should watch it when I try to play a joke; shouldn't I?

The other thing that concerns me about this section and that I'm not sure the government's amendment is going to fix is that as far as I can see, employers – and I'm not just talking about hospitals; I could be talking about long-term care facilities, group homes, psychiatric hospitals, et cetera – eventually can set out rules that allow nonregistered persons to conduct activities that ordinarily would be restricted under the act to the professionals. I fear a slippery slope here, and we're at the very edge of it, particularly if the government gets away with its long-term agenda of allowing for-profit hospitals. At least the blue-ribbon panel report said: hey, if it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, the government has to call it a duck. [interjections] Yes. We're getting the appropriate response from the government side; that's nice. It said: call them hospitals; don't pretend you can get around this issue by not calling them what they really are.

Now, from the psychologist's perspective here, I was contacted earlier today and given some concerns at least from the psychologist's perspective, but for all I know this may be from the professionals' perspectives as well. So I'll just go through those very briefly. One person, anyway, says:

This Act gives a small number of people (council) full authority over the profession with the only accountability being the submission of an annual report . . . to the Minister.

They want to know: "Can the minister ensure the public that they are being served and protected from such a report?" I think that's a legitimate question. I don't pretend to have the answer to it.

The council is the college and the college is a corporation . . . with all the protection afforded corporations i.e. (the rights, powers and privileges of a natural person . . .) However, the Act does not provide for the internal checks and balances required of most organizations to be considered 'formal' organizations. i.e. The Societies Act requires a minimum number of by-laws before a society can be incorporated.

She goes on to note:

The Health Professions Act gives the regulatory body of the profession the responsibility to "govern its regulated members in a manner that protects and serves the public interest." (Section 3(1)(a)) It does not require the formation of by-laws for how this governance is to occur. i.e. council may make by-laws for governance . . . In other words, they are not required to have formal procedures for the internal governance of the profession.

A very good point.

The Health Professions Act does not ensure that the members of the profession have the right to elect their colleagues to council. Instead, the Act states that "Council may make by-laws . . . establishing a council and respecting the number and selection or election [those being the operative words] of the voting and non-voting members of the council, their terms of office, removal from office and the filling of vacancies."

Good point. You know, which is it? Is it selection or election, and what are the obligations here?

Council is also given authority to set the fees paid by the regulated members . . . Can the Minister assure the public that the councils who are in control of the by-laws won't abuse their powers and simply appoint their friends to "paid" positions on council?

Now, I don't really know where that concern is coming from, but I'm just trying to read it into the record. I couldn't really figure out that suggestion or argument.

Two more points:

Regulations do not require ratification by the membership before they come into force. They only require approval by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

I think that's a legitimate point. I'm not sure of the remedy, but it

may have to do with the internal organization of each of the professionals affected.

They point out:

Regulations have direct bearing on the practice of health care professions. The Health Professions Act assumes that the composition of council is representative of the entire membership and is sufficient to make decisions on such important and crucial issues as registration requirements . . . continuing education . . . and limitations on services.

This one person says:

This is not the case. Can the minister assure the public that the composition of council is representative of the entire membership and is sufficient unto itself to make all decisions for serving and protecting the public?

5:20

Concerning codes of conduct and standards of practice, the HPA does provide for the College to "provide, for review and comment, a copy of a proposed code of ethics and proposed standards of practice to (a) its regulated members . . . However, it is the council who "may adopt a code of ethics and standards of practice after it has reviewed and considered the comments received from a review described in subsection (2)."

The final point this person makes:

Members of a profession are held accountable to all decisions they make related to their professional practice. If a professional determines that a code or standard is in violation of their client/patient's best interests, there is no procedure to ensure that this will be given due consideration. This could put the professional in a conflict between obeying the dictates of the profession and serving and protecting the public. How does this serve the public?

I can certainly see where she's coming from on this because the practice of psychology is I guess, first of all, one in which you might find yourself one on one with your client and, number two, not able to consult with somebody regarding a matter that might come up and needing clarification of what the right or wrong thing to do is.

So I lay those concerns out in front of the sponsoring member, and I'm sure he will address them at some point in the debate.

I'd like to point out that in 1994 nursing programs were cut back by 25 percent, and they have still not been reinstated. We're facing a nursing crisis right now, and it's not just the short term; it's the medium term as well. You would think that as a priority over creating such legislation, the government would find it more important to funnel money back into nursing training programs than to create books the size of novels, which take me usually a couple of evenings to read anyway.

Let me conclude, Madam Speaker, by saying that I plan to be vigilant about that government amendment, and if it's not tight enough, it will not enjoy the support of this caucus in any event. I would like to thank the members of the AARN and the psychologist in particular, who requires anonymity for contacting me, for giving me their thoughts.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Madam Speaker, I rise to move that we adjourn debate in regards to Bill 22, the Health Professions Act.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Having heard the motion by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, does the Assembly agree with the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Carried.  
The Government House Leader.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In light of the hour I'd move that we do now adjourn until 8 this evening, at which time we come back in Committee of Supply.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree with the motion as moved by the hon. Government House Leader?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: Carried.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:24 p.m.]

